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Title
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Permalink
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Journal
Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies, 14(3)

ISSN
0041-5715

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Publication Date
1985

DOI
10.5070/F7143017017

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FROM WHITE KITCHENS TO WHITE FACTORIES:
The Impact of World War I on African-American Working Women in Chicago

by

Ula Yvette Taylor

Introduction

While historians and diplomats kept their eyes on Europe during "the war to end all wars", the struggle against the Axis powers was the furthest thing from the minds of African-American working class women. These women may not have heard the thunderous explosions of German mortar, or suffered the effects of mustard gas, but World War I brought irreversible changes to their lives. As Europe underwent massive destruction, American capital witnessed a process of unprecedented industrial growth. And these Black women did not need to be economists to explain the changes taking place in the structure of American capitalism. On the domestic front the "Great Imperialist War" simply meant this: Capital demanded more labour to sustain and expand production; Black housekeepers wanted out of the White folks kitchen; and Black Southerners wanted to escape the hell fires of Dixie.

Maurine Greenwald in her seminal study, Women, War and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States (Westport, 1980) attempts to assess the impact of war-time industrialization on America's female proletariat. Unfortunately, she focuses exclusively on industries which, by and large, affected only White women. Clearly, the same generalizations derived from a study of White women cannot be applied directly to war-time experiences of African-American women. Any comprehensive study must take into consideration the fact that Black women occupy the lowest rung on the ladder of class exploitation, positioned directly below Black men, White women and then White working men. Thus, the entrance of Black women into the industrial labour force took on a radically different form from that of White women: They were handed the least desirable occupations created by war-time mobilization. Although Greenwald does not deal with this fact in depth, she does admit in her introductory remarks that "Black women's occupational status followed a very different course during the war from that of White women. By and large, Black women remained concentrated in traditional forms of female employment to a far greater extent than White women."[1] Nevertheless, change did take place. But as soon as the Armistice was signed, these very Black women were the first to receive their letters of dismissal from their respective employers.

Chicago, the center of gravity for Black women escaping the South, and a national bastion of industrial capitalism, provides the basis for a revealing case study of the impact of war-time industrialization on the African-American female proletariat. By looking at the occupational changes, the material conditions which brought about these changes, struggles and conditions in and out of the work place, the role of organized labor in Black women's struggles and the effects of Post-War recession, this articls hopes to elucidate the life and struggles of Chicago's Black female workers.

World War I and the American Economy

As soon as war was declared on a continental scale, the U.S. economy felt its effects. During the initial phase of the war (1914) an unexpected dislocation of industrial exchange, trade and commerce caused a sharp recession in the U.S. This disruption of international trade created an acute unemployment problem. In fact, Congress and trade union leaders seriously considered passing legislation to block European immigration in order to solve the dilemma of employment.

Nevertheless, the recession was short-lived. By the summer of 1915, European belligerents began placing substantial war orders with American factories. This foreign demand was accompanied by full resumption of normal peace-time production; the country's steel and rubber plants, ship building facilities and petroleum industry began to operate at full capacity, with overtime production a common occurrence. The destruction of Europe's economy also compelled America's farmers to increase agricultural production in order to meet the enormous needs of its European allies. Food processing also underwent a dramatic transformation, its operations doubling and tripling during the war.[2]

Black women's entrance into the industrial labor force corresponded to these economic disruptions and structural changes caused by the war. Despite the brevity of U.S. participation (April 1917 to Armistice in November, 1918), the entire industrial labor force underwent a profound readjustment. The first effect of the war was almost a self-fulfillig prophesy: The steady flow of European immigrants was virtually reduced to a trickle. European immigration declined from 1,218,480 in fiscal year 1914, to 366,748 in 1916, and 110,618 in 1918.[3] Though this may have solved the unemployment problem of Americans, capital (and labor) got more than they bargained for. The sudden cut off of cheap immigrant labor created a massive labor shortage, which in turn created opportunities for White women, Black women and Black men to enter occupations to which they were

hitherto denied. Moreover, the conscription of over four million men to serve on the European battlefront exacerbated the war-time shortage of labor. Black women were more than ready to fill these industrial vacancies.

Chicago was undeniably hit hard by these structural changes. First of all, the number of foreign born in Chacago had actually decreased from 33.5% in 1910 to 28.4% in 1920.[4] Secondly, Chicago's industries expanded tremendously, especially in the case of food products, clothing, leather, iron, steel products and munitions.[5] The most dramatic example can be found in Chicago's meat packing industry. For the state of Illinois, the number of wage earners in the meat packing industry increased from 31,315 in 1914 to 54,179 in 1919.[6] The value of production also increased from $394,748,592 to a staggering $1,083,090,049.[7]

In order for capital to maintain such a substantial rate of profit, a steady supply of cheap labor had to come from somewhere. Although Chicago's White women and Black men filled much of the void created by capital's demand for labor, Black women also struggled to gain the most "favorable" positions in the hierarchy of industrial production. Unbeknownst to many, there had already existed a Black female working class in Chicago prior to the war. The war merely created an opportunity to facilitate their long and arduous struggle to overcome the unofficial industrial color bar.

The Roots of Chicago's Black Female Proletariat

The overwhelming majority of African-American women who came to Chicago during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were children of the land -- wives of tenant farmers, share-croppers, and agricultural labourers, who had cultivated the dying cotton-wrenched soil of the 'Black Belt'. By 1900, 79.5% of the Black female population in the United States were engaged in some form of agricultural production.[8] Bound by the vagaries of the share cropping system and living in a state of virtual debt-peonage, African-American women in the South were forced to take on additional tasks as laundresses and domestic servants.[9] No less that 60% of the southern servants were Black between 1870 and 1900, and this figure went as high as 90% in some states. By 1890, 75% of all Black servants were employed in the South.[10]

Travelling by railroad with personal possessions in hand, they envisioned the opportunity to fulfill hopes, dreams and thus produce a better life for themselves and their families. These Black women left the southern states to seek jobs they heard were so plentiful in the North. By 1900, 16,073 Black males and 14,077 Black females resided in Chicago.[11] Black

women discovered many similarities between the North and the South. They soon found that the only jobs opened to them were those of scrubbing the kitchens of Chicago's White elite. In 1900, 81.2% of the total Black female labor force were engaged in domestic service. Out of these 4,00 women, 2,541, or 51.6% were classified as servants and waitresses. Black women also laundered the White community's dirty clothes. By 1900, 18.7% of Black Chicago's working women were laundresses. Although 585 women, or 11.9% of the Black female wage earners were engaged in "manufacturing", 547 of these women were classified as dressmakers and seamstresses. (See table below.)

Black women seized any opportunity to move beyond domestic work. In many cases this opportunity took the form of Black women assuming the role of strikebreakers. The struggles of organized labor compelled capitalists to exploit racial animosities in order to undermine strikes and bust unions. The 1904 Meat Packing Strike in Chicago encouraged plants (especially Armour and Morris) to recruit Black strike breakers, primarily from the South. Between July 22, 1904 through July 25, 1904, over 2,000 Black men and women entered Chicago and were distributed among the packing houses.[12] John Fitzpatrick, organizer for the Chicago Federation of Labor stated that "without the colored men and women now employed in the plants, the companies would not be able to operate. The employers have been unable to hire white men."[13] Some of these Black workers viewed working in Chicago as an opportunity for advancement. They did not know what was going on as far as the strike was concerned. One instance of employers resorting to underhanded tactics involved two young Black girls ages thirteen and fourteen years. Hired in Cincinnati, they were told that they were to receive jobs as domestics, but later discovered that "their real destination was to Chicago yards as strikebreakers duty."[14] Because the press constantly overemphasized the activities of Black strikebreakers, racial animosity between Black and White workers was accelerated. Out of desperation for employment some Black women acted as strikebreakers despite the violent atmosphere which surrounded the strike yards. The union made a desperate effort to keep Black women and men out of industry (and out of Chicago altogether) rather than organize them.

By 1910, there was a substantial quantitative change in the Black female labor force, but very little qualititive change. The total number of Black women in Chicago reached 21,418.[15] Although there was a slight decrease in the number of Black women employed as domestic servants, the number of women employed as laundresses increased slightly. What is clear from a glance of the 1910 census is that Black women began to enter the field of clerical work. However, individual office clerks, store clerks and saleswomen made up little over two percent of Black female wage earners. (See

TABLE I

AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN IN SELECTED OCCUPATIONS, CHICAGO, 1900

Selected Occupations	Total Number of Jobs	Number of Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Total Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Negro Labor Force in Particular Occupations
		Females		
Manufacturing				
Dressmakers and seamstresses	21,083	547	2.6	11.3
Occupational total	46,719	585	1.3	11.9
Trade and Transportation				
All categories	36,371	143	0.4	2.9
Occupational total	36,371	143	0.4	2.9
Professional				
Actresses	621	51	8.2	1.0
Musicians	2,035	49	2.4	1.0
Teachers	7,200	38	0.5	0.8
Occupational total	12,340	194	1.6	3.9
Domestic and Personal				
Barbers and hairdressers	475	76	16.0	1.6
Boardinghouse keepers	2,151	104	4.8	2.1
Housekeepers	2,963	152	5.1	3.1
Laundresses	6,636	918	13.8	18.7
Servants and waitresses	35,340	2,541	7.2	51.6
Occupational total	54,045	3,998	7.4	81.2
Total employed	149,867	4,921	3.3	100.0

Source: U.S. 12th Census, 1900, Special Reports: Occupations, pp. 516-523. Reprinted from Spear, Black Chicago, p. 31. (Slight alterations).

table below.) A study by the Chicago school of Civics and Philanthropy discovered that clerical and office work in Chicago's department stores and most mail-order homes were "absolutely closed" to Black women.[16]

On the eve of the war, Chicago's entire laboring population were in a precarious position. The constant influx of immigrant labor from Southern and Eastern Europe absorbed most of Chicago's available unskilled jobs, leaving thousands jobless and homeless. Charitable organizations estimated that by December 1, 1913, 100,000 workers in Chicago were unemployed.[17] An investigator who visited the Swift and Co. Packing house found about 250 men and 15 women "congregated about the entrance to the factory in an unsuccessful effort to secure employment."[18] The free employment agencies created in 1899 were simply not efficient enough to accommodate the masses of unemployed. A Chicago unemployment commission, appointed by the mayor, published a report which called for the creation of a "central state labor exchange."[19] This report in itself displays how intense unemployment in Chicago was prior to the war.

On the eve of the war, Black women workers found themselves between a rock and a hard place. As Black folk steadily flowed into Chicago looking for work, African-American women had to choose between cleaning up after White people or taking up residence in the city streets. Little did they know that the conflict about to occur in the distant lands of Europe would drastically alter their position in the labor hierarchy of Chicago.

Black Women and the Great Migration

> Boll-weevil in de cotton,
> Cutworm in de cawn,
> Debil in de white man,
> Wah's [War] goin on.[20]

What was hitherto a steady trickle of Black labour from the South became a flood of dark bodies with the advent of World War I. The migration to Chicago brought numerous Southern Blacks into the city. Often the approximate size of the influx has been greatly exaggerated by contemporary observers. In 1918 a Methodist Minister projected that between 75,000 and 100,000 Blacks had come to Chicago since the beginning of 1917.[21] It can be assumed that many Blacks after entering Chicago subsequently moved to other areas outside the city. The 1920 census reports Chicago's Black population at 109,458, which is a dramatic increase of 65,355 since 1910.[22] Beverly Duncan and Otis D. Duncan estimate that 94% of this increase, or approximately 61,000, was due to the

TABLE II

AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN IN SELECTED OCCUPATIONS, CHICAGO, 1910

Selected Occupations	Total Number of Jobs	Number of Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Total Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Negro Labor Force in Particular Occupations
Females				
Manufacturing				
Dressmakers and seamstresses[g]	15,099	867	5.7	9.9
Milliners	5,461	62	1.1	0.7
Trade				
Store clerks[e]	10,925	43	0.4	0.5
Saleswomen[e]	11,632	21	0.2	0.2
Professional				
Actresses	1,147	54	4.7	0.6
Musicians	3,241	136	4.2	1.5
Teachers	8,573	53	0.6	0.6
Nurses	2,488	42	1.7	0.5
Domestic and Personal Service				
Barbers and hairdressers	1,789	316	17.7	3.6
Boardinghouse keepers	5,000	267	5.3	3.0
Charwomen	1,152	98	8.5	1.1
Housekeepers	3,594	191	5.3	2.2
Laundresses[h]	7,122	2,115	29.7	23.8
Laundry operatives	4,466	184	4.1	2.1
Servants	34,437	3,512	10.2	39.5
Waitresses	3,319	141	4.2	1.6
Clerical				
Bookkeepers, cashiers, accountants, stenographers	31,646	110	0.3	1.2
Office clerks	11,072	45	0.4	0.5
Total employed	236,811	....	3.7	100.0

g Not in factories.
h Not in laundries.

Source: <u>13th Census, 1910, vol. 4, Population: Occupation Statistics</u>, pp. 544-47. Reprinted from Spear, <u>Black Chicago</u>, p. 33 (slight alterations).

migration of Blacks to Chicago.[23] Within an eighteen month period beginning January, 1916, more than 50,000 Blacks entered Chicago.[24]

Favorable economic conditions created by war-time industrialization was the key to the massive northward movement of southern Black folk. From 1916-1919, women could make up to $3.00 a day in industry compared to a meager fifty cents a day picking cotton in Mississippi.[25] Even in domestic service young, unmarried Black women received an average of eight dollars a week, plus room and board. This is about double of what they would have received in Mississippi.[26] Moreover, labor recruiters secured jobs for Black people migrating to Chicago. It was also common for Black businesses to 'reserve' jobs for Black workers. The Green Engineering Co. and the Hurgison-Walker Refractories Co., for instance, claimed to be giving 200 Afro-Americans employment.[27]

In spite of this transformation in Northern industry, too many historians in the past have placed too much emphasis on the 'pull factors' as determinants for Black migration from 1915-1919.[28] In fact, it was precisely the institution of share-cropping and tenancy, and the political and social apparatuses which reproduced such an oppressive system, that served as a catalyst for the most significant internal migration in the history of the U.S. Any attempt to overcome the debt-peonage system, either through collective action or individual struggle, brought the wrath of the Ku Klux Klan and other White terrorist organizations. The soil of the south is drenched with the blood of those who refused to submit to this system of semi-slavery. Murder, however, was only used in extreme cases. The planter class always kept in mind that the purpose of repression was to mobilize Black labour. With the creation of Black codes and vagrancy laws, landless, unemployed labour could always be procured through the convict-lease system. In 1917, in Jefferson County, Alabama alone, 6,000 convicts, most of whom were Black, labored in Alabama coal mines and cotton fields. Out of this number, there was a total of 1,087 women, 969 of whom were Black.[29] The increasing repression in the south, as well as the failure of King Cotton, brought about by boll weevils, cannot be ignored. 1915 not only witnessed the resurgence of the Kaln, but during 1917, outbreaks of violence erupted in East St. Louis, Northern and Southwestern Georgia and Western South Carolina.[30]

Afro-American women had no doubts about their status in the South. Though the chains were removed, their bondage was all too evident. However, to view the initial movement North as the accumulation of fear and oppression among Southern Blacks would lead to a distorted, one-sided view. Since destroying one's roots is such an overwhelming decision, these

women had to have some sort of confidence and knowledge of the Northern Utopia. In this capacity the Chicago Defender, one of the nation's leading Black newspapers, played a significant role in informing the Southern masses of the virtues of Northern life. The Chicago Defender which also had a large circulation in the South, ran headlines which highlighted the oppression of Black people in the South. African-Americans were bombarded with headlines such as "325 Negro Men and Women Lynched and Shot for Fun" or "South Carolina To Re-Enslave Colored People."[31] The Defender, supported by Black and White business interest in Chicago, ran articles and advertisements enticing Black southern labour to seek employment in Chicago. One such headline reads: "Are You a Farmer? Here Is A Job For You At $1200.00 A Year -- No Color Line."[32] Another specifically addressing Black women states "Wanted -- 25 Girls For Dishwashing Salary $7.00 a week and board."[33]

As Black women entered the "Promised Land," they immediately discovered that Chicago was not as "Promised" or the Chicago Defender maintained. Nonetheless, African-American working women relentlessly struggled to transform their living and working conditions.

Black Women on the Line: World War I and the African-American Woman

When industrialists began to cry out for women's assistance during the crisis of 1914-1918, women from all over Chicago responded to the call, hoping to seize this opportunity as a means to overcome the barriers of sexism in America. As soon as Black women responded to the demands of capital, it soon became evident that women meant "White women". And thus, the so-called "opportunities" offered by war-time industrialization were gained by Black women in earnest struggle.

It was precisely in the "Promised Land" of urban Chicago where racism in industry reached its most acute proportions. "Chicago", wrote Alice Henry of the Women's Trade Union League, "the second city industrially, as well as in population, and which has now the third largest Black population in the country, has been the area that has offered the colored working woman the least opportunity to advance."[34] Although, as we shall se below, many employers closed their doors to Black women, white working class women were just as adamant in blocking their entrance into hitherto lilly-white occupations. One representative of a Chicago base factory noted that, "among the girls we had quite a lot of trouble in departments against hiring colored girls. For every colored girl employed we lost five white girls."[35]

The difficulty Black women encountered was all too obvious. Nonetheless, a substantial shift, both in their material conditions and in their consciousness, did occur. However, while White women walked in the factories and mills, Black women -- those who were able to cross the gulf -- were forced to crawl.

Unlike the occupational shift that was to take place during WW II, where women moved from the home to the factory and "Susie Homemaker" became Susie Bombmaker", Black women during WW I were already overwhelmingly wage workers.[36] Although many of these women shifted from kitchen to factory, the kitchens in which they toiled were not their own. From the end of the Civil War, Black women struggled desperately to escape the drudgery of domestic service. In 1890, the average tenure of servants was less than a year and a half. With new possibilities opening up because of WW I, the average length of service nationwide declined to an average of three to six months.[37]

The flight of Black women from domestic service created a devastating labour shortage. In 1917, nearly all employment agencies in Chicago specializing in domestic service reported "an unusual shortage" of help.[38] Such a shortage forced tremendous wage increases for domestic workers. During the war, the average weekly wages for live-in housekeepers and cooks was $12.84 plus room and board. Some workers received up to $18.00 weekly plus room and board.[39]

In some rare cases White Chicago's "leading citizens" overcame the "servant problem" by resorting to sheer, unadulterated slavery. A system of "indentured servitude" existing whereby White citizens would pay the passage of Southern or West Indian migrants in exchange for labor. During the war, a Black woman from Florida was contracted in this manner by a prominent White family in Chicago. After being abused and forced to stay beyond her agreed tenure, the woman attempted to leave. She finally did escape to the office of the Chicago Urban League, but not before "her employer had kicked, beaten and threatened her with a revolver if she attempted to leave."[40] The Chicago Commission on Race Relations reported a similar case in which a young Jamaican woman was receiving $6.00 per week, "one dollar of which was paid in cash and the balance deducted to cover the expense of clothing and transportation." When she attempted to leave, the White employer tried unsuccessfully to become the young woman's legal guardian (for she was still a minor) so that he could retain her labor.[41]

Probably one of the most dramatic examples of the enslavement of Black domestics in Chicago was a case referred to the Negro Fellowship League in 1919. After being beaten

and driven out of her home, a young Black woman showed up at the steps of the League, then run by Ida B. Wells. THe woman knew no Black people in Chicago because the family for which she worked kept her from having any contact with other African-Americans. When the League went to assist her, it was discovered that "the girl had been given to the White woman as a little child and that in all these years she had worked for the family she had received no remuneration."[42] The family had her enslaved for thirteen years![43]

Domestic slavery in Chicago was obviously an exception to the rule. As a whole, women walked out of White people's kitchen anyway they knew how. It is interesting to note that women left domestic service in favor of jobs that were often lower in wages and where conditions were often times worse. Although the social stigma attached to domestic work definitely had something to do with this phenomenon, I would argue that it has been overstated in case of Black women. Overall, this attitude could not have prevailed among working class Black women to the extent that it has among Whites. First of all, as in David Katzman's study of domestic servants in the U.S., complaints of service depriving one of their dignity came from Whites and "educated" Blacks.[44] Black women who may not have had as much "formal education" tended to complain more about long hours and constant surveilance. Secondly, the sheer number of Black women who have engaged in domestic service makes it difficult to believe that they were looked down upon by those in their own community. Although the social stigma attached to domestic service cannot be dismissed, I would also suggest, as David Montgomery has argued in his study of industrialization and craft workers, that these Black women were engaged in a battle for "workers control".[45] Essentially, Montgomery's argument is that the rise of workers' militancy and syndicalist ideology was due to the workers loss of control over the work place. The constant overseeing of "professional managers" a manifestation of Taylorism, tended to dehumanize workers at the work place. In the case of domestic workers, long hours and constant surveillance, as well as constraints on movement were all common complaints of Black domestics. More importantly, Black maids and housekeepers hated being in the constant company of Whites. Donald Sutherland, in his excellent study of domestic labor in the U.S. has recognized this:

> Long work days and few leisure hours also meant that servants spent much of their lives isolated in their employers' households, denied what they considered their natural liberties. Servants yearned to escape the control of employers. Their lack of freedom, more than any other aspect of servants lives, worsened the social stigma. It was the main reason given by factory, shop, and office workers for avoiding service

as an occupation.[46]

Black women struggled to overcome the lack of freedom which accompanied live-in domestic work. Their initial tendency was to accept day work instead of live-in work.[47] This is significant since residential segregation made it necessary to travel daily to the White neighborhoods. In addition to having to spend money on transportation, a tiny domicile on the Southside could not have been as physically attractive as a small room in a plush mansion.[48] Nevertheless, the Black servant struggled earnestly to free herself of the watchful and demanding eye of her employer. She wanted a place she can truly call her 'home'. White employers, however, interpreted this attitude differently. Black women were "accused of having no family feelings," yet the fact remains that they were willing to accept a lower wage and live under less advantageous conditions for the sake of being free at night.[49]

Although having a home to return to provided some partial relief to the lives of domestic workers, it is clear that Black women placed greater emphasis on leaving the occupation altogether. Here is a most revealing statement by an ex-domestic servant and migrant from Georgia who was able to secure employment in a Chicago Box factory during the war:

> I'll never work in nobody's kitchen but in my own any more. No indeed! That's one thing that makes me stick to this job. You do have some time to call your own, but when you're working in anybody's kitchen, well, you're out of luck. You almost have to eat on the run; You never get any time off, and you have to work half the night usually.[50]

Washing clothes was another form of domestic service in which substantial numbers of Chicago's Black female workers toiled. Unlike household service, technological advances have influenced women's work in laundry during the war. Essentially, washing clothes took two general forms: hand laundries and power laundries. Hand laundries fell under the general category of day labor. With the development of huge mechanical laundry operatives, Black women suddenly found themselves unskilled wage-laborers working under the vagaries of Taylorist principles of scientific management.

As soon as the idea of power mechanical laundries caught on, they quickly expanded in the urban areas. This shift accounts for the decrease of Black women as hand laundresses and the augmentation of their forces as laundry operatives. Between 1910 and 1920, the number of black women employed as hand laundresses decreased by 21.6% nationwide. As operatives in power laundries, their number increased from 12,196 in 1910

to 19,115 in 1920 -- a 56.7% increase.[51] This increase is far more dramatic in the urban areas when one considers that most of the hand laundresses recorded in the 1920 census labored in the rural South.[52] In 1910 there was little more than a handful of power laundries in Chicago, but by 1914 222 establishments were in full operation. By the war's end, 250 power laundries were established in Chicago.[53] While the number of laundries increased during the war, the total labor force decreased slightly. In Chicago 1914, 8,398 workers were employed in power laundries. By 1919, this figure was reduced to 8,137.[54] In part, the post war recession accounts for the slight decrease. However, changes in the production process allowed employers to wash more clothes with less labor. Nevertheless, while the total labor force declined slightly, the employment of Black women as laundry operatives augmented dramatically. A survey of twenty of Chicago's leading laundries reveals the extent of this increase:

Black Women Employed in 20 Leading Laundries, Chicago

Year	Number of Black Women
1915	118
1916	180
1917	220
1918	350
1919	520

Source: Derived from Negro in Chicago p. 363.

The rapid increase in Black female labor represents a substantial shift in the general policies of Chicago's laundry operatives. The Chicago Commission on Race Relations discovered that prior to WW I, "The opportunity to work in a laundry was practically denied to Negro women until labor shortage forced laundry owners to tap this reserve labor supply."[55]

As Black women entered these industrial laundries, they discovered some of the worse working conditions that could be found anywhere in Chicago. Although the state of Illinois passed a 10-Hour Bill in 1909 for female labor, at least 806 of Chicago's laundries were working in excess -- some days thirteen to fourteen hours.[56] Nearly all of Chicago's laundries were poorly lighted, poorly ventilated and the deterioration of these women's health was more the rule than the exception. The chemicals used often caused eczematous eruptions of the skin and respiratory problems. Many hand ironers, a job in which Black women predominated, suffered from back problems as a result of constantly bending over, and often complained of rheumatism and swollen feet from standing for long periods of time. Furthermore, many of the machines,

especially the mangle cylinders, did not have guards, thus hands and fingers were often crushed.[57]

Black women who left domestic service for this type of work were exposed to conditions of Taylorism -- "rationalized production" or "scientific management" -- for the first time. What was accomplished by one person was not broken down into listing, marking, sorting, shaking, mangling, folding, starching, machine ironing, hand ironing, finishing, mending and wrapping. Handwashing however, was still done for delicate items.[58] In addition to the division of labor, one of the most objectionable aspects of power laundries was the punch clock system -- a manifestation of Taylorist "time management". At one plant in Chicago, shirt finishers were required to register the entire process of folding, wrapping and ironing each shirt on an automatic clock which was attached near the ironing boards. The object, of course, was to speed up work. But the Black laundry operative saw the automatic clock as "an insult, implying that she needs to be goaded to make her work more swiftly."[59] Thus, once again, the struggle for workers control becomes a central issue.

In comparison to domestic service, Black women felt they had achieved more control over the workplace in the power laundries. In spite of the poor conditions and health hazards which accompanied laundry work, a survey of the Chicago Commission on Race Relations found that:

> Negro women were eager to desert work as domestic servants and "family washer-women", with the social stigma and restricted human contact involved, to enter laundries where more independence was possible, hours were better standardized and association with fellow-workers enlivened the work day. The employment department of the Urban League experienced great difficulty in supplying the demand for domestic servants and laundresses in the home, but had no difficulty in filling openings in laundries.[60]

Though laundry work may have been considered a step up from domestic service, Black women were not content with washing White people's dirty linen. Life may not have been "no crystal stair", but these women were still climbing. Taking advantage of the war-time labor shortage, African-American women began to make some in-roads in the area of meat packing, textiles and clerical work.

Cleavers, Cloth, and Clerks: The Expansion of Black Women in Industry

During the early twentieth century, many of Chicago's Black female toilers were initiated to full-scale industrial production as strike-breakers in the Stockyards conflict of 1904. Hundreds of Black women entered the meat packing industry in hopes of securing a permanent position. Following the defeat of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workman, they were all summarily expelled. By 1910, only eight Black women were actually recorded in the employ of Chicago's meat packers.[61] When war-time demand for meat and meat products resulted in the expansion of the industry, Black women were called upon once again. By 1920 after nearly ¼ of the laborers in the Stockyards had been laid off, 615 Black women, 47 of whom were classified as clerks, drew their wages from various meat packing firms in Chicago.[62] During the war, the packers employed perhaps twice their number and even more temporarily passed through the industry.[63] Black women who labored in the Stockyards found conditions just as bad, or sometimes worse, than the conditions in the power laundries. Nevertheless, they tended to remain in this line of work rather than return to domestic service.[64] The majority of black women were employed in the offal and casings departments. The offal department was the section of the slaughterhouse where animal organs (e.g. tongues, brains, hearts, livers, intestines, etc.) were removed, trimmed and washed. These rooms were usually wet and slippery and were often poorly ventilated.[65] Trimmers and washers in the offal rooms, two jobs in which there was a high concentration of Black women, only received an average of $8.00 to $10.00 per week.[66] Work in the casings department was similar. Casing, as they ware called, were the intestines of hogs, sheep and cattle and were principally used as sausage containers. These women would remove and trim the casings, and prepare them to be stuffed with sausage. "Casings rooms", reveals one study of the meat packing industry, "were the wettest and in general, the most disagreeable places in which [Black] women were found employed in appreciable numbers."[67] These workers were paid a slight bit more, earning between $10.60 to $12.00 per week. Compared to White men however, African-American women received $6.00 to $8.00 less.[68] Black women were also paid lower wages compared to Black men. At the Plankington Packing Company, in 1917, while Black men earned between .43 and .64 per hour, Black women were paid an average of 30½¢ per hour for the same work.[69]

Although accidents were less severe in the slaughtering houses than in other industries, women would often cut themselves; it was not uncommon for trimmers in both departments to lose fingers. Morover, since nearly all rooms were chilled, Black women often complained of rheumatism and

respiratory problems. Those who worked in the fancy meat cooler or freezer pack departments suffered the worse -- lacking natural light and ventilation, temperatures ranged from 32° to 40°F.[70] The most favorable place to work, the smoking houses, were not open to Black women. There the floors and walls were dry and clean, the climate was much more favorable since these rooms remained warm, and unlike most of the other departments, stools were provided.[71]

When meat packing houses were not interested in the labor of the African-American women, they attempted to "break in" to Chicago's needle trades. As we have seen above, a number of Black women in Chicago had established themselves as seamstresses and dressmakers. However, before the War, it was near impossible to receive a position in the city's factories and shops. Instead, they were self-employed, or were contracted by various firms to perform piecework.[72] During the war, piecework performed in this fashion was still common.

About 1916-1917, Black women began to make substantial headway toward securing employment in the needle trades. In March 1917, hundreds of Black women entered the ladies garment industry by breaking a strike of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union. (See the next section.) Ironically, Black women made the most substantial gains as milliners -- a highly skilled trade. Milliners basically produced trims and designs on women's hats, lamp shades, and other similar products. The work of the milliner was truly a handicraft. And because of this, breaking into such an industry was far more difficult than attempting to secure an unskilled position. Below Carl Sandburg recounts an incident which portrays one of the many methods Black women used to secure positions as milliners:

> "I have a daughter seventeen years old," she said to the proprietor.
> "All places filled now," he answered.
> "I don't ask a job for her," came the mother's reply.
> "I want her to learn how to do the work like the White girls do. She'll work for nothing. We don't ask wages, just so she can learn."[73]

Unfortunately, once established as skilled milliners, they did not receive the protection of a Union wage, for once they joined the ranks of organized labor, they were immediately dismissed. At one wholesale millinery establishment, all Black women employed there during the war received the wages of hand sewers while doing the work of a skilled milliner.[74]

The "ultimate" goal of Black working-class women was clerical work. One woman who had taught school in Atlanta,

Georgia and came to Chicago in 1915 was initially forced to find work in the Stockyards. "I hated the surroundings at the Yards and the class of people who worked there, so when I had a chance to work in a mail-order house I changed."[75] Though some firms hired individual Black women to fill positions as clerks, stenographers, typists, and saleswomen, their numbers were insignificant. Only a few of the mail- order houses were willing to hire Black women on a large scale. However, these attempts to use Black women to overcome the war-time labor shortage was merely seen as an "experiment".

In 1918, one mail order house decided to hire ninety Black women who were to be organized in a Jim Crow "colored unit". By 1919, this number was increased to 650 women, "who were given the promise of advancement and Negro supervision."[76] By 1921, the so-called "colored unit" had been liquidated. Another mail-order house opened a unit of 650 Black women in Fall 1918. However, they were hired solely to fill in during the Christmas rush. Once Christmas season was over, they were summarily expelled. One year later, the firm attempted the same thing, this time hiring 1,050 Black women for the Holiday seasons. By 1921, this unit was also liquidated.[77]

Although the working conditions which accompany clerical work were not as physically taxing as the aforementioned industries, the Jim Crow policies of Mail-order houses and retail stores were mentally and emotionally draining. The mail-order house just mentioned was notorious for some of its recruitment practices. Since it was located in the "Loop District" -- the heart of White Chicago -- the sudden influx of Black female workers "caused complaints by the local restaurants, fearing the loss of old patrons." Rather than support these women's right to go to lunch, the company installed a cafeteria service -- clearly an attempt to confine Black women to the work place.[78] The segregation of dining rooms and lavatories was also common among retail stores. At one Chicago clothing store, the first floor dining room was "for salesladies only" (all White), while all Black employees had to dine in the basement.[79]

There can be no doubt that during the War a fundamental change in the composition of Chicago's labor force had occurred. Black women found in Chicago's industries a haven to escape from domestic service. To their disappointment, however, the opportunities these women seized upon were meager to say the least. The majority of the firms in Chicago discriminated against Black people outright. Black women could not secure employment as conductors, motormen, guards, and ticket agents for Chicago's urban transportation system. Nor could they break into any of the "State Street" department stores. The Chicago Telephone Company did not hire a single Black telephone operator. By the War's end, its only black

employees worked as porters, window washers, and maids.[80] Even companies which fared worse than others because of the war-time labor shortage hesitated on the question of hiring Black women. Chicago's taxi firms refused to hire Black drivers, but in 1918 employed about 150 Black women to wash and polish the cars at night.[81]

When women could not sell their labor power on the market, whether to industrial capitalists in the factories or in the form of cleaning their houses, these women still had to survive. Thus they had to occassionally rely on selling a most precious commodity: their bodies. In 1914, Black women constituted 16% of the total number of cases heard in Chicago's Moral Court, while Black people only constituted a little over 2% of the total population. By 1920, this figure had reached 20.8% of the total population. Walter Reckles, in his study of vice in Chicago, has observed that:

> There has been a considerable growth of Negro prostitution since 1910, when it was almost negligible. From the available data it appears that Negroes have much more than their smaller number in the total population and that the causes for this are to be found in the heavy Negro migration, the attending unadjustment, the restricted occupational outlets for Negro women, the disorganized neighborhood conditions in which most Negroes must live, and greater liability of police arrest.[83]

Even prior to WW I, earnings of prostitutes were very low. In 1913, an Illinois State body, the O'Hara Committee, investigated the connection between low wages and prostitution. While the average pay for women employees at Sears was $9.12 a week, prostitutes were receiving an average of $8.00 per week, Black prostitutes receiving much less.[84]

Black women were quite conscious of the discrimination and racism they confronted in the employment office. Meanwhile, these women were bombarded with War propaganda which emphasized that the conflict in Europe was a struggle "for democracy". In 1918, Mary Roberts Smith of the Chicago Urban League made one last impassioned plea for the City's industries to open its doors to Black women:

> The few openings for the Negro women are only a beginning, but with training and the opening up of large opportunities, she, too, can become a great power in the industries of America. For surely this nation which is now pouring out its life blood for the principles of right and freedom, will not deny these to any class of its citizens, least of all to those who have been faithful to

them in every national crisis.[85]

Black women did not sit patiently waiting for "democracy" to fall from the sky. Instead, they engaged in earnest struggle, both in and out of the work place.

Class Struggles in Chicago: Black Women and Organized Resistance

The expansion of production and the absorption of surplus labor due to war-time demands not only opened up opportunities for organized labor, but the steady influx of black folk from the South forced the American Federation of Labor to become somewhat more lenient in its racist policies.[86] The increasing number of Black migrants compelled organized labor to begin to incorporate African-American workers into its ranks. In 1917, the Chicago Labor News suggested, "Let us open all unions to the Negro", admitting that in Chicago, "many unions have discriminated shamefully against the Negro . . . And we condemn them heartily for doing so."[87]

Black women's initial contact with organized labor usually was that of an outsider looking in. As strike breakers in the Meat Packing Strike of 1904, from their point of view, the strikers were the violent attackers screaming racial epithets, not the employers. Moreover, since much of Chicago's Black female labor force during the war were recent migrants from the rural South, many were not at all familiar with the principles and activities of organized labor.

Ironically Chicago served as the midwife for the (White) women's labor movement in the U.S. In 1903 the National Women's Trade Union League was established in Chicago, Boston and New York. Chicago housed the national headquarters and the Chicago League was the center of activity of women's trade union struggles.[88] Affiliated to the A F of L, the WTUL had a similar outlook toward organizing the Black worker: Their dark skinned sisters were ignored. Under the leadership of Mary E. McDowell, Agnes Nestor and Mrs. Raymond Robins, no anti-discrimination clause or any mention of Black workers show up in the annual reports and bylaws of the Chicago League.[89] In fact, its journal Life and Labor had not published articles concerning Black women until 1919.

Although the WTUL was more of an umbrella organization than anything else, most of its energies were directed toward practical organization. However, the organizations of Black women was not on the WTUL's war-time agenda. The Chicago Commission on Race Relations discovered that during and after the war "considerable unrest" emerged among Black women who were denied promotion from the apprenticeship wages long after

these women had established sufficient skill. Although the WTUL had known about this situation for some time, it refused to act.[90] Despite the rapid growth of Chicago's Black female proletariat, by 1918 the Chicago WTUL had only one Black organizer.[91]

One may argue that the WTUL's neglect of Black women was justified on the grounds that Chicago's African-American females were concentrated in "unorganizable" occupations and were an insignificant minority in the industrial proletariat. Yet, WTUL officials could not have thought domestic servants and laundry workers were unorganizable in view of the fact that the Laundry Worker's Union was affiliated to it. Furthermore, the employers of Cook County Hospital (cooks, waitresses, maids, janitors, and laundresses) were organized by the WTUL in 1915.[92] This union may have been composed of domestics, but it had no Black membership. On top of this, Life and Labor and the WTUL of Chicago's Bulletin maintained regular coverage of the Progressive Household Club in Los Angeles -- a groundbreaking attempt to organize servants.[93] Nevertheless, Chicago's WTUL never made one attempt to organize Black domestic workers before or during the war.

In spite of the WTUL's neglect of its darker sisters, organized labor in the needle trades and meatpacking industry could not afford to overlook Black women. Before the war, garment workers did not need to worry about organizing African-Americans since the industry was lilly-white. In fact, during the great "Garment Workers Uprising" in Chicago, 1910-1911, Black strikebreakers were not called in to bust up the union.[94] This is surprising when one considers the fact that in 1910 nearly 900 Black women were employed outside of the factory as seamstresses and dressmakers.[95] Nonetheless, employers caught on to the idea of using Black women in this capacity during another major struggle led by the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union in 1917.

Unlike most unions, ILGWU had a tradition of non-discrimination in its ranks. Due in part to its close relationship with the Socialist Party and its flirtation with the Industrial Workers of the World, one noted labor historian has observed that "ILGWU welcomed Negroes into its ranks more readily than almost any other trade-union."[96] But before 1917, the Chicago locals of ILGWU did not have to worry about organizing Black women.

On February 13, 1917, ILGWU called a strike in which 10,000 waist and dress makers walked off their jobs. Their demands were basic enough -- a two percent wage increase; a forty hour work week; and enforcement of sanitation laws. Ten weeks later, following 1200 arrests, 240 contempt citations and brutal repression, the strike ended in total defeat of the

union.[97] In addition to the increased use of repression, the employers success lay in the use of Black women strike breakers. Max Brodsky, a representative of the union, admitted that:

> As a result of the 1917 strike we have now about 450 colored women workers in our industry. We lost the strike and this is how the colored women got into our industry. Now the union knew the object of the colored woman coming into our industry, and we decided to have them organized just like the white woman and girls...[98]

The principal stance of ILGWU was truly an exception to the rule. In the stockyards where greated numbers of Black workers were concentrated, organized labor had no choice but to bring African-Americans into the Union. Following the obliteration of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butchers Workman's Union during the 1904 strike, thirteen years passed before the Amalgamated made another attempt to organize the stockyards. On July 25, 1917, the Stockyard's Labor Council was formed under the leadership of such labor stalwarts as William Z. Foster, John Fitzpatrick and John Lovestone. The goal of the Council was to organize 100% of the skilled and 90% of the unskilled workers by November of that year.[99]

Since Black workers constituted almost 12,000 of the packinghouse workers at the founding of the Council, a special effort had to be made to bring them into the organization. This "special effort" was typical of A F of L policy. Rather than organize Black and White workers in the same local, the Council created a segregated local known as Butcher Workman's Local 651.[100] While White women had their own locals, organized with the assistance of the WTUL, Black women were lumped with Black men in local 651. In fact, organizing activities among women focused exclusively on Polish women and often White laborers.[101]

Needless to say, Black women, as well as men, were not the easiest group to organize. Their history as strikebreakers and as victims of racial violence determined their attitude toward organized labor. Irene Goins, the only Black woman organizer in the stockyards recognized the difficulty in organizing Black women. "My people...know so little about organized labor that they have had a great fear of it, and for that reason the work of organizing her proceeded more slowly than I anticipated."[102] Unfortunately, many white organizers lacked Goins' patience in dealing with Black workers. In fact, from the very beginning Union organizers were leery of organizing Blacks and regarded them "as being almost immune to organization and unreliable after joining."[103]

In addition to the attitudes of White workers themselves, elements among Chicago's Black petty-bourgeoisie played a central role in discouraging Black workers from joining the ranks of organized labor. Richard E. Parker, member of the Negro Protective League, led a massive campaign against the trade unions. On March 10, 1917, Parker formed the "American Unity Labor Union" which advertised "Do not pay $33.00 to join a white man's union, when you can join a Black man's union for $5.00."[104] He would then collect the workers' $5.00, in addition to subsidies from the employers, and use these Black workers to break strikes. "This Union", wrote Parker, "does ot believe in strikes. We believe all difference between laborers and capitalists can be arbitrated."[105] The packers also subsidized Black preachers and politicians to induce Blacks not to join the union.[106]

From Class to Race: Black Club Women and the Urban League

The activities of the various Black petty bourgeois organizations cannot be dismissed. Racial and national oppression of Black people forced numerous women to seek organizations they viewed as "their own". Many Black women organizations were established in Chicago, emphasizing the philosophy of self-helf and racial solidarity. Chicago's Black women's clubs were noted for their considerable interest in seeking "to guide girls coming from the south in search of employment and to protect them from unscrupulous employment agencies that exploited them and even forced them into prostitution.[107] Noted club women such as Ida B. Wells, Frances A. Keller, and Fannie Williams organized to assist single migrants as they entered Chicago. At a meeting in 1914 of the Illinois Federation of Colored Women's Club recommendations were made to "appoint reliable women to meet trains and direct unprotected girls coming into the city."[108]

Black women's clubs also played an essential role as private employment agencies. In 1910 Ida B. Wells organized the Negro Fellowship League. This organization established an employment agency and coordinated social services in the 'black belt'.[109] The City of Chicago had over a half-dozen Black women's clubs, which together formed the Colored Women's Conference. These clubs operated employment bureaus as well as kindergartens, day nurseries, mothers clubs, penny savings banks, parent-teachers associations, and sewing schools.[110]

The majority of the social work done by club women was not directed to aid Black women workers in survival strategies. Instead they focused on producing "civic ladies". In 1910 an irregular column appeared in the Chicago Defender entitled "Women." Discussions ranged from the proper ways a widow must mourn her dead husband, ornamenting silk stockings

and other irrelevant points of etiquette. One article in the Chicago Defender called upon "club women" in the North to "assist our hard working ministers in the education of newly emigrated public from the South, into our way of living; teach them, first, to remember that they have left the South, and they must wear their Sunday clothes during the week... If our club women don't get busy along this line, we may be disgraced by some unthinking individual from down home."[111] Another article in the Chicago Defender by an irate "club woman" noted that: "Many of our women have become an eyesore on the street cars, in the street; in the public places and theaters, because they do not act or dress right...their heads are covered with rags and shawls...out in the stockyards they go into the pay office with their hands full or vituals, making loud noises and cutting up in general." This article goes on to say that "better negroes" must "counsel" these people from the South.[112] The whole attitude of "better negroes" versus "people from the South" demonstrates the existence of class distinctions among Blacks in Chicago.

Clearly, the conditions of African-American women in Chicago were not only qualitatively different as a result of the war, the problems specific to urban migration were far more acute during this period. Consequently, the Urban League took on an extremely large proportion of the burden of responding to the needs of these newly arrived southern folk.

The Chicago Urban League was established in 1917 during the period when Black migration was heaviest. The League's activities were divided into five sub branches: Administrative Department, Childrens Department, Industrial Department, and Settlement work.[113] The bulk of the Urban League's activities were concentrated in the Industrial Department. Not only did the League place thousands of workers in jobs throughout Chicago, it carried out numerous industrial investigations and provided training for the unskilled. From spring of 1917 to 1919, the League secured employment for over 20,000 Black men and women, and as many as 55,000 sought jobs and housing through its offices. It was so important to the Black community that by 1919 it took over the operations of Chicago's Black Belt office of the U.S. Employment Service when it folded because of a cut in federal appropriations.[114]

The Children's Department and settlement work were the second two most important departments affecting newly arrived African-American women. As migrants entered the city, an Urban League representative would often be stationed at the railroad. After assisting in finding them lodging in a "proper" house, they would often recruit "a club woman to provide verbal advice as to things migrants should know and do."[115] Through the Wendell Philips Settlement, taken over by

the Chicago Urban League in 1918, a day nursery was provided to care for the children of African-American working women.[116]

Though the Chicago Urban League was able to accomplish a great deal, it fell far short of the mark in terms of providing a revenue for the struggle of working class Black women and accommodating the newly arrived immigrant population from the South. In 1919, it raised only $28,659.[117] This was undoubtedly an insignificant sum for the amount of work needed to be done among Chicago's Black community.

Overall, the social network that existed in Chicago to deal with the needs of African-American women workers was virtually non-existent. The massive influx of African-Americans from the South during the war simply overwhelmed the Black community, creating the basis for a qualitative change in Black organization. By 1919, African-American working class women in Chicago, mindful of their southern roots, were fed up with their conditions.

Back To The Kitchen?: Black Women in Post War Chicago

Soon after the Armistice was signed Black Chicagoans greeted the returning all-Black 8th Illinois regiment in mid-February 1919. Four hundred thousand cheering people lined Michigan Avenue as the 8th proudly marched past the crowd. As offices and stores closed for the day, 60,000 exuberant Chicagoans jammed the Coliseum to welcome the African-American unit.[118] While Chicago's residents, Black and White alike, joined in "a mighty chorus of, 'My Country T'is of Thee, Sweet Land of Liberty'," the oppression and struggle of BLack workers and the impending post-war recession seemed all but forgotten.

However, on July 27, 1919 thousands of Black and White Chicagoans entered the streets for a different reason. The pressures of the nation's post-war recession ignited a violent eruption of racial violence which raged virtually uncontrolled for the greater part of five days. White gunmen in automobiles sped through the Black Belt shooting indiscriminately as they passed and Black snipers fired back. Roaming mobs shot, beat, and stabbed their victims to death. Only several regiments of state militiamen and a cooling rain finally quenched the passions of the rioters. Nonetheless, sporadic outbursts occurred for another week. The toll was awesome. The great "Chicago Rebellion" of 1919 left 537 wounded and 38 lifeless corpses.[118]

The Rebellion of 1919 should not have shaken Chicago's residents at all. Beneath the joyous Armistice Day Celebration lay the seeds of revolt: America's economy once

more began to undergo a substantial structural change. The massive recession which followed the war, exacerbated by the return of over four million veterans of war, laid the foundation for nearly a year of national unrest unequalled before the 1960's.[120] In an ominous report, the Illinois Department of Labor predicted that, "Women who, previous to the war, were content to work in stores or offices for a comparatively small wage, once having secured double or triple the same wage at a kind of work which, though unpleasant, puts a sure and increased reward in the pay envelope, will not be content to go back to the lower wages paid to the routine worker."[121] Thus, the Department not only predicted women's post-war resistance to losing their position in the industrial labor force, the report unflinchingly accepted the fact that women were among the first to be laid off. Black women, however, were the very first to feel the red, white and blue club of economic recession.

By early May of 1919, over 10,000 Black workers were out of work accounting for about 20% of Chicago's total unskilled labor force.[122] Of those "expelled" from these apparently temporary positions, Black women suffered far greater losses. With the onset of the post-war recession, Black women workers were the first to go. A survey of 170 Chicago firms who had hired Black women for the first time during the war reveals that all of these "temporary" employees had been discharged by 1919. What is even more interesting is the fact that 47% of these firms hired Black women to perform work they were already familiar with. 24% were hotels and restaurants, which hired them as kitchen help or bus girls; 12% were hotels and apartments in which these women served as chamber maids; 11% were laundresses; 4% toiled in garment factories; 3% were laborers and janitresses and only 2% (7 stores) hired Black women as stock 'girls'.[123] At the stockyards' National Box Company, where one-half of the unskilled were Black, Black women were immediately discharged after a pay raise for (White) women workers was implemented. One BLack woman complained, "after they gave that [pay raise] there came a whole lot of white ladies."[124]

The stockyards also reacted to the changing economic conditions by laying off 15,000 workers in the Spring of 1919. An inordinate number of employees were Black, Black women being the first to receive their notice of dismissal. When asked why Black women and men were the first to be dismissed, one company spokesman insisted that "no discrimination is being shown in the reducing of our forces." But he admitted that Blacks were the first to go. "It is a case" he continues, "of the survival of the fittest, the best man staying on the job. It is a fact that the Southern Negro cannot compete."[125]

The rather small, yet significant gains made by African-American women in the field of clerical work was also reversed as soon as the war came to an end. Sears and Roebuck and Montgomery Ward, two mail order houses which during the war decided to experiment with Black female labor for the duration of the Christmas season, decided in 1919 that this "experiment" was no longer necessary. One employer levelled with the Department of Labor, admitting that Black women were hired "solely on account of the shortage of labor" and "as soon as the situation clears itself no more colored help will be employed."[126] Despite promises by both firms, by 1923 Sears and Wards had yet to re-hire the nearly 2,000 Black women it had previously employed during the holiday season.[127]

Reducing the labor force by tossing Black women into the growing reserve army of labor was not the only way employers reacted to America's shifting economy. In many cases, it was common for Black women to be demoted from skilled and semi-skilled jobs to unskilled labor. Such a shift undoubtedly entailed a substantial wage reduction. One woman, who after having worked on the assembly line at the National Box Company, was told that she would have to work loading trucks if she was to remain employed -- a job formerly the domain of male workers. "If you don't want to do that," her foreman told her, "you will have to go home, because they are going to have all whites."[128] This tendency on the part of employers brought harsh criticism from Chicago's Urban League. League representative Forrester Washington wrote, "To force all the women of one race into unskilled work is as unscientific as it is unjust. Where ever they have been given the opportunity, colored women have shown that a large proportion can master the intricacies of the most complex machine. What a waste of productive power to use such individuals as scrubwomen!"[129]

Nevertheless, most Black women found themselves searching for a new job rather than becoming acquainted with a new trade. Chicago's unemployment situation was devastating. In 1920, the Chicago Urban League submitted a report on the employment situation following a thoroughgoing investigation. The report indicated that demands for Black female labor after the war declined much further than that of Black men. Despite the fact that 941 males and 739 females applied for employment through the League, there were <u>twice</u> as many requests for male labor than female labor. Out of this prospective army of unemployed, the Urban League was only able to place 722 men and 371 women.[130] The report goes on to state:

> Women's work presents a very discouraging outlook. Hundreds of needle workers are out of employment by the closing of many of the smaller shops which employed colored girls. The Women's Trade Union

TABLE III

AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN IN SELECTED OCCUPATIONS, CHICAGO, 1920

Selected Occupations	Total Number of Jobs	Number of Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Total Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Negro Labor Force in Particular Occupations
Females				
Manufacturing				
Dressmakers, seamstresses[f]	8,513	1,070	12.6	5.2
Milliners	4,341	103	2.4	0.5
Semi-skilled, unspecified	50,811	2,542	5.0	12.2
clothing industry	16,596	440	2.7	2.1
Laborers, unspecified	4,653	591	12.7	2.8
Occupational total	77,427	4,456	5.8	21.5
Trade				
Store clerks[d]	13,330	518	3.9	2.5
Saleswomen[d]	13,343	112	0.8	0.5
Occupational total	34,711	933	2.7	4.5
Professional				
Actresses	1,028	65	6.3	0.3
Musicians	3,058	134	4.4	0.6
Teachers	11,739	138	1.2	0.7
Nurses	5,004	116	2.3	0.6
Occupational total	27,633	705	2.6	3.8
Domestic and Personal				
Barbers and hairdressers	2,156	729	33.8	3.5
Boardinghouse keepers	3,677	334	9.1	1.6
Charwomen	1,280	123	9.6	0.6
Housekeepers	4,982	315	6.4	1.5
Laundresses[g]	6,638	2,853	43.0	13.7
Laundry operatives	3,907	1,409	36.1	6.8
Servants	26,184	6,250	23.9	30.1
Waitresses	5,175	678	13.1	3.3
Occupational total	60,304	13,235	21.9	63.8
Clerical				
Bookkeepers, cashiers, accountants, stenographers	58,995	478	0.8	2.3
Office clerks	37,968	594	1.6	2.9
Occupational total	98,818	1,125	1.1	5.4
Total employed	311,535	20,755	6.7	100.0

f Not in factories.
g Not in laundries.

Source: U.S. 14th Census, 1920, vol. 4, Population: Occupations, pp. 1076-79. Reprinted from Spear, Black Chicago, p. 154.

League reports have many workers unemployed due to slowness of trade. Imigrant white girls are said to be consuming much of the work offered to domestics...colored seem in most cases as reluctant as ever to accept domestic employment.[131]

As we can see, Black women remained adamantly opposed to going back to the "White folks kitchen." By 1920 the percentage of women who were classified as servants and laundresses not in laundries (hand laundresses) experienced a real decline. Moreover, the turnover rate for domestic workers ranged between three to six months.[132] Many women resisted being forced back into domestic service at all costs. One woman, a graduate of a Southern University, who had commited suicide, told her landlady shortly before her death that she would kill herself before she would go back to work in a kitchen. Prior to her death, the young woman was reported to have said, "There's no chance for us colored girls, even if we have an education...In the South they try to make us immoral, and in the north they won't let us keep a decent job."[133] Another Black woman, who during the war obtained a job as a clerk in a mail order house, told the Chicago Commission on Race Relations that she would not work as a domestic again

for any money. I can save more when I'm in service, for of course you can get room and board, but other things you have to take -- no place to entertain your friends but the kitchen and going in and out of the back door. I hated all that. Then, no matter how early you got through work you could only go out one night a week -- they almost make you a slave. You can do other work in Chicago and you don't have to work in such places.[134]

Once again the issue of workers' control over the workplace dictates the attitudes of domestic servants.

Black women's disdain for domestic service was so great, the service industry was one of the few areas to experience a post-war labor shortage. Charles Boyd of the Chicago Free Employment Office reported in 1920 that "the domestic situations have been the most difficult to cope with, notwithstanding the high wages offered. On account of this scarcity, the day-worker has supplanted in many homes, the housemaid, and is receiving a wage equivalent to some of the high grade positions."[135]

Unfulfilled Democracy and Black Labor

Post-war recession was serious, but to view the violent uprisings which took place in CHicago during the Summer of

1919 as simply a manifestation of economic struggles would lead to a narrow, economic determinist approach. Instead, it is necessary to look at the rising militancy of African-Americans which resulted in the unfulfilled promise of "liberty and justice for all."

African-Americans, men and women alike, paid close attention to the war -- the war that was supposed to make the "world safe for democracy." To Black people, this meant the extension of democratic rights to include their own people. Thus, to many Black women, along with White women, sweating in hot, poorly-lighted rooms for a meager wage was seen as an act of patriotism. In fact, many of Chicago's Black working women volunteered their time to the Red Cross, and if at all possible, bought liberty bonds.[136]

By the war's end, Black men and women were imbued both with pride in their race and with a fierce determination to possess the rights pledged to Americans by the Constitution. As an upshot of the Great Migration and Black people's contributions to the Allies' victory -- as soldiers, industrial workers, purchasers of Liberty Bonds -- Black folks felt they had earned the enjoyment of these guarantees. They were resolved also to defend their life, liberty and property against White aggressors. When the jubilance of Armistice died down, Black women and men discovered, to their dismay, that the promise of democracy in the U.S. was not forthcoming. In a moving poem by Roscoe C. Jamison, the post-war consciousness of BLack fokk was succinctly portrayed.

> These truly are the Brave
> These men who cast aside
> Old memories, to walk the blood-stained
> pave
> Of Sacrifice, joining the solemn tide
> That moves away, to suffer and to be
> For Freedom -- When their own is yet denied!
> O Pride! O Prejudice! When they pass by,
> Hail them, the Brave for you are now crucified.[137]

The wholesale expulsion of thousands of Black women from the occupations they had gained during the war was also seen as part and parcel of the failure of American democracy in the eyes of various Black leaders. Forrester Washington of the Chicago Urban League castigated capitalists, government and White labor aristocrats for allowing the conditions of employment for Black women to deteriorate to such a degree. "If either the American employer," wrote Washington, "or the American laborer continues to deny the colored woman an opportunity to make a decent living, the Bolshevik cannot be blamed for proclaiming their affirmation of democratic principles a sham."[138]

Organized Labor

African-Americans were not alone in their expectations of change in American Society. Organized labor, who for the past two years subordinated its demands for the sake of "the war effort", also expected to receive many of the promises offered by Wilson's Administration. Collective bargaining and a more systematized method of arbitration were among these demands. Instead, the state and the employers raised the specter of "Bolshevism" in the labor movement, and summarily bludgeoned strikers with the same red, white and blue club Blacks were experiencing. From 1919-1920, the employers, with the support of the state, declared war on organized labor. John H. Walker, president of the Illinois State Federation of Labor observed that "the enemies of habor [have] been employing a greater variety of means and methods and exerting greater strength and influence to destroy the labor movement...than at any time I have been connected with it."[139]

The post-war campaign to organize Chicago's Meat Packing Industry was one of the few struggles directly affecting Black women workers. Before the war's end, as we have shown above, the organization of Black workers in the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workman's Union looked optimistic. By the beginning of 1919 nearly 60% of the industry's Black workers were organized.[140] Post-war conditions, however, created a dilemma for organized labor in the stockyards. On the one hand, the success of the Amalgamated was dependent on organizing Blacks since they constituted such a large proportion of the labor force, after the war. On the other hand, employers played upon the real racial animosities which emerged between Black and White workers. In fact, according to the Chicago Federation of Labor, meat packers contributed to subsidize Black preachers and politicians to convince Black workers to reject unionism.[141]

During the middle of 1919 the Amalgamated presented demands for further wage increase to Judge Alshuler, the arbitrator. While preparing their long-awaited case, the union redoubled its organizing activities among Black men and women laborers. In connection with this campaign to increase Black membership, a mass demonstration was to take place on July 6, 1919. Black and White workers -- men and women -- were to parade together throughout the stockyards district. On the request of the packers, however, police stipulated that Black and White workers had to march separately.[142] Nonetheless, Black participants held true to the ideals of united struggle. One of the marchers carried a placard which read:

> The bosses think that because we are of different
> color and different nationalities we should fight

each other. We're going to fool them and fight for a common cause -- a square deal for all.[143]

Three weeks later, the ideals embodied in this placard became little more than a memory in the midst of racial violence. The Union found it exceedingly difficult to promote the unity of Black and White toilers while they were battling in the streets. Following the Chicago Rebellion, as Alma Herbst concluded in his pioneering study of Blacks in Chicago's meat packing and slaughtering industry, that Black women and men

> "could no longer be aroused by bombastic and oratorical attempts to portray the improvement in conditions to be realized by a united group of workmen... conditions was unavailing when dealing with the Negroes who had so recently joined the industry."[144]

By the end of 1919, the Amalgamated realized that its drive to organize Black men and women workers had failed. "To be frank" admitted the secretary of the Stock Yards Labor Council, "we have not had the support from the colored workers which we expected. Our methods of propaganda may have been weak somewhere; probably we do not understand the colored workers as we do ourselves...Be that as it may, the colored worker has not responded to the call of unionism."[145] If he had considered the racial animosities resulting from the Chicago Rebellion as well as Black workers aversion to segregated 'Jim Crow' locals, he might have been able to account for the Black workers' response. When the union finally went out on strike in 1921, the companies again defeated them by using Black women and men as strikebreakers.[146]

Unlike in the stockyards, Black women made substantial gains with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. From 1919 to the end of 1920, the Garment manufacturers initiated a massive campaign to destroy ILGWU. In order to undermine many of the gains of the Union, employers opened a number of shops in the Black belt which employed Black women only. Rather than attempting to close these shops down, ILGWU stood firm to its non-racial principles and organized these Black women under its auspices. When the Union succeeded in organizing some of these all-Black shops, employers made concerted efforts to replace the unionized Black workers with White labor.[147] In one case, newly organized Black women workers were locked-out, the employer offering to settle with the union so long as it agreed to furnish White labor. ILGWU refused and declared a strike. In several other instances, the union found it necessary to call strikes against employers who persisted in discriminating against Black workers.[148] By the early 1920's, the presence of Black women in Chicago's

garment industry could not be denied. William L. Evans of the Urban League observed that Black women "are a real factor in the needles trades and must be counted by the thousand."[149] However, despite ILGWU's non-racial policy, most Black women garment workers were non-union.[150] There are many reasons that could be suggested to account for Black women's poor response to the call of unionism. First, some of them may have experienced the exclusionary policies of other unions and cultivated a distrust for White labor organizations altogether. Secondly, ILGWU itself, being an industrial union, had yet to bring in many of the unskilled which it had pledged to organize.[151] These were the positions in which Black women were concentrated. Thirdly, one could imagine the difficulties White organizers had when attempting to unionize the shops on the southside. Finally, the expanded 'reserve army of labor' created by the post-war recession certainly made union organizing far more difficult, for both Black and White alike. This was quite unfortunate because non-union Black women received drastically lower wages than both union and non-union White women. By 1920, while union wages for shirt and dress makers was $37.40 per week and White non-union workers received $25.00, non-union Black women were forced to accept $18.00 per week for the same work.[152]

The aftermath of the war came rather unexpected to Chicago's Black female labor force. Many who had migrated from the South in search of "The Promised Land" suddenly found themselves jobless and in the midst of a racially hostile environment. If there was one thing Black women discovered during the aftermath of the WWI, it was this: the struggle for justice and democracy had not ended with the war -- it was just beginning.

Conclusion

Overall, war-time conditions had initiated a 'qualitative' change in the lives of working-class Black women. As the Southern migrant stepped off the train and walked toward the door of opportunity, she discovered that no such door existed. Instead, she was forced to enter through the 'servants entrance' of industrial production. The door marked 'colored only' led her directly to her place of residence -- the crowded slums of Chicago's Black Belt. The door labeled 'organized labor' was slammed in her face, although in some cases the African-American woman was able to enter through a cracked window marked 'strikebreakers only'. And insofar as her search for organization and her desire for Black sisterhood was concerned, the many doors she came across all stipulated that she leave her Southern Africanisms and working-class culture outside on the porch.

In the eyes of Black women, cooking and cleaning for White Chicago was similar to being in Egyptland before the coming of Moses. These 'hewers of laundry' and 'drawers of wine' -- Chicago's domestic servants -- aspired to free themselves from the shackles of the White folks kitchen. In search of greater freedom and dignity at the workplace at all costs, Black women initiated another 'Great Migration' -- from the kitchen to the factory. Essentially, these women of African descent seized upon the opportunities created by the war-time labor shortage. To their dismay, however, most of them found themselves performing the same type of labor as before. Nevertheless, the greater freedom enjoyed by these women compelled them to cling to these jobs for dear life. Many women were willing to accept lower wages and labor under more physically demanding conditions.

Far more than her White sister, Black women were forced to accept the worst jobs, the lowest wages, and by far held the most precarious position in the labor force. African-American women were the very last hired, and always the first to be laid off. Although Black women struggled earnestly just to hold these positions, they refused to submit to their new working conditions passively. To her disappointment, however, White working-class women refused to join hands in struggle with Black women, one exception being the militant ladies' garment workers. Denied access to trade unions, the exploitation of Black women was pivotal to the maintenance of capital and the consolidation of a racially divided labor force.

When organized labor turned its back on the Black woman worker, she turned to "her own kind". Club women, espousing Booker T. Washington's philosophy of self-help, made an attempt to assist Black working women in their struggles. Unfortunately, these 'club women' utterly failed to provide the needed assistance and organization. Their class origins determined from the outset their disdain for working-class Black folk. Draped in the chains of assimilationist ideology, an ideology which emerged out of three centuries of oppression, petty-bourgeois leaders of the 'club movement' worried more about transforming African-American women into 'civic ladies' than meeting the immediate needs of this nascent female labor force.

As Black women left domestic service to work as slaughterhouse workers, skilled milliners, laundry operatives, garment workers, clerks, and the like -- little did they know that the changes which took place in the American economy during the War were of a temporary nature. While Black women felt a sense of permanence in their new occupational status, capitalists had no illusions as to the temporary character of their labor. Hence, it was inevitable, following the shift to

post-war production levels, that an intense struggle between these diametrically opposed forces would ultimately erupt.

1919 was the breaking point. The sudden influx of returning War veterans, coupled with the post-war depression, led to the Chicago Rebellion. Black women struggled fervently, though in most cases unsuccessfully, to retain their positions at the workplace. Under no circumstances had Black women desired to return to domestic service. They realized that their occupational status in the industrial labor force, and in society at large, had hardly changed at all. The War to 'make the world safe for democracy' did not bring a modicum of democracy to the Black woman laborer -- not even enough to permanently secure many of the positions they had gained during the war. While Black men discovered that they were used as cannon fodder for a war whose fruits they could not share, Chicago's toiling daughters of Africa discovered that they too were being used to sustain a conflict in which they had no vested interest. These women merely assumed the roles of 'substitute cogs' in the great wheel of industry.

NOTES

[1]Maurine W. Greenwald, Women, War and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States (West Port, 1980), p. 22.

[2]Alexander Bing, War-Time Strikes and Their Adjustment (New York, 1921), pp. 6-7; Paul H. Douglass, Real Wages in the United STates, 1890-1926 (New York, 1930), p. 178; Greenwald, Women, War and Work, pp. 15-16; Philip Foner, Women and the American Labor Movement (New York, 1979), p. 499; H.B. Olson and Helen Olson, "Wartime Industrial Employment of Women in the United States," Journal of Political Economy, vol. 27 (October, 1919).

[3]Department of Labor, Bureau of Immigration, Annual Report of Commission General of Immigration, 1914 (Washington D.C.: G.P.O., 1915), p. 3; Ibid., 1916, p. 3; Ibid., 1918, p. 9.

[4]Helen Jeter, Trends of Population in the Region of Chicago (Chicago, 1927), pp. 34-35.

[5]See Chicago Commission on Race Relations, The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot (Chicago, 1922), p. 357. This document was a result of white fears over the Chicago Rebellion of 1919. It is by far the most substantial published compilation of primary source material concerning Chicago's Black community for the period in which

this study takes place. Hereafter it will be cited Negro in Chicago.

[6]U.S. Bureau of Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Manufactures, 1919, vol. X (Wash. D.C., G.P.O., 1923), p. 59. It must be noted that nearly 90% of the Illinois meat packers were concentrated in Chicago.

[7]Ibid., p. 47.

[8]Department of Commerce of Labor, Bureau of the Census, Statistics of Women at Work, 1900 (Wash., D.C., 1907), p. 34.

[9]This is quite evident in the fact that the 1900 Census states that 65.6% of Black female wage-earners were laundresses. Ibid., p. 34.

[10]U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890: Population (Wash. D.C.: GPO, 1893-95); See also Daniel Sutherland, Americans and Their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States From 1800-1920 (Baton Rouge and London, 1981), p. 58.

[11]U.S. Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900 (Wash. D.C.: GPO, 1902), p. 65.

[12]Chicago Tribune July 24, 25, 26, 1904.

[13]William M. Tuttle Jr., "Some Strikebreakers Observations of Industrial Warfare," Labor History vol. 7, no. 2 (Spring, 1966), p. 194.

[14]Chicago Tribune August 24, 1904; also quoted in Alma Herbst, The kNegro in the Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry in Chicago (Boston, 1932), p. 26. See also, J.R. Commons, "Labor Conditions in Meat Packing and the Recent Strike," Quarterly Journal of Economics 19 (November, 1904).

[15]U.S. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population (Wash. D.C., 1912), p. 504.

[16]Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, "Employment of Colored Women in Chicago," risis vol. 1, no. 3. (January, 1911).

[17]Report of J.H. Bradford, Special Agent Covering Investigations of Chicago, February 16 to 19, 1914 (unpublished report), U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, Archives, 1912-15, microfilm, reel 5, p. 3. The problem of unemployment was so acute that Job A. Walker of the Illinois State Federation of Labor, at the Unemployment Conference held in February of 1914, suggested that "shutting off of

immigration for ten years would solve the question of th unemployed." "Notes of Selig Perlman, Meeting of th Unemployment Conference on Friday, February 27, 1914," U.S Commission on Industrial Relations, Archives, 1912-15 microfilm, reel 5, p. 7.

[18]"Report of J.H. Bradford," p. 3.

[19]Carl Hookstadt, "Report on Labor Legislation Administration and Conditions in the State of Illinois,' (unpublished, confidential report, 1914), U.S. Commission or Industrial Relations, Archives 1912-15, reel 3, p. 45.

[20]Quoted in Dewey Palmer, "Moving North: Migration of Negroes During World War I," Phylon (Spring, 1967), p. 55.

[21]Chicago Tribune March 15, 1917; April 4, 1918.

[22]U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census, 1920, p. 119.

[23]Otis D. Duncan and Beverly Duncan, The Negro Population of Chicago: A Study of Residential Succession (Chicago, 1957), p. 34.

[24]Emmet Scott, Negro Migration During the War (New York, 1920), p. 102.

[25]Florette Henri, Black Migration Movement North, 1900-1920: The Road From Myth to Man (New York, 1976), p. 139.

[26]Ibid., p. 142; Scott estimates that women who earned $2.50 per week in domestic service in the South could earn between $2.10 to $2.50 per day in the North. Scott, Negro Migration During the War, p. 17.

[27]Chicago Defender March 4, 1916. Black workers also relied on racial solidarity as a means of obtaining jobs in the North. One laborer wrote to the Chicago Defender, "i seen in the defender that you are interested in the well fair of the colored people those of the classe that is interested in themselves and coming to the North for a better chance so I take pleashure in riting you that i may get some under standing about conditions about getting work as I see that you are in touch with the foundry warehouse in the manufactory concerns." This letter was dated May 1, 1917, New Orleans, Louisiana. Other letters expressing similar sentiments can be seen in Emmett Scott (ed.), "Letters of Negro Migrants of 1916-1918," Journal of Negro History 4 (1919).

[28]This is evident in the work of Florette Henri, Black Migration and Daniel Johnson and Rex Campbell, Black Migration in American: A Social Demographic History (Durham, NC, 1981). Lloyd Hogan's Principles of Black Political Economy (Boston, 1984) obviously cannot compare to Henri's massive study of migration, but his treatment of the subject has made an important contribution in terms of redressing other scholars' overemphasis on pull factors.

[29]Scott, Negro Migration During the War, p. 21.

[30]See W.E.B. DuBois, "The Migration of Negroes," Crisis vol. 14, no. 2 (June, 1917), pp. 63-66; DuBois and Martha Gruening, "Massacre of East St. Louis," Crisis vol. 14, no. 5 (September, 1917), pp. 219-238. It is also clear that the majority of migrants were recruited from those states which suffered most from boll weevil and floods, and where the general treatment of African-Americans was worst. U.S. Department of Labor, Division of Negro Economics, Negro Migration, 1916-1917 (Wash. D.C.: G.P.O., 1919, repring., Negro Universities Press: New York, 1969), p. 93.

[31]Chicago Defender january 1, 1910; January 13, 1914.

[32]Chicago Defender February 19, 1910.

[33]Scott, Negro Migration During the War, p. 17.

[34]Alice Henry, Women and the Labor Movement (New York, 1923), p. 209.

[35]Negro in Chicago, p. 395. William Harris has argued that "there was more opposition among white women to working directly with black women than was found among white men at the prospect of working with black men." Harris, The Harder We Run: Black Workers Since the Civil War (New York and Oxford, 1982), p. 65.

[36]Maurine Greenwald makes this point in Women, Work and War, p. 13.

[37]Elizabeth Ross Haynes, "Negroes in Domestic Service in the United States," Journal of Negro History 4 (1923), p. 393.

[38]State of Illinois, Department of Labor, First Annual Report, July 1, 1917 to June 30, 1918 (Springfield, 1919), p. 10.

[39]Negro in Chicago, p. 370; see also Haynes, "Negroes in Domestic Service," p. 415. What is peculiar about the war-time wage increases is that it seems to be confined to Black women domestics. One study of White domestic servants

in Chicago revealed that real wages actually declined durin World War I. Alice Hanson and Paul H. Douglas, "The Wages o Domestic Labor in Chicago, 1890-1929," Journal of America Statistical Association 25 (1930), pp. 47-50. What seem clear here is the fact that White women were not desired a much as Black women to perform the functions of service Though many reasons can be suggested, it is beyond the scop of this paper.

[40]Negro in Chicago, p. 371.

[41]Ibid., p. 372.

[42]Ida B. Wells, Crusade for Justice: The Autobiograph of Ida B. Wells, ed. by Alfreda M. Duster (Chicago, 1970), p 409.

[43]Ibid., p. 410.

[44]See David M. Katzman, Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America (New York, 1978).

[45]See David Montgomery, Workers Control in America: Studies lin the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 1-7; pp. 9-10.

[46]Sutherland, Americans and Their Servants, p. 104. Similar descriptions can be found in Eleanor Johnson, "Household Employment in Chicago," U.S. Department of Labor, Bulletin of the Women's Bureau, no. 106 (Wash. D.C.: G.P.O., 1933), pp. 56-57; Leslie Woodstock Tentler, Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States (New York, 1979), pp. 143-44.

[47]David Katzman points out that in the South the same pattern of residential segregation did not exist. Rather, the old pattern of adjacent housing allowed Black domestics to have their own home and remain on the 'masters' premises. Unfortunately, these women were still at the employers beckon call twenty-four hours per day. Katzman, Seven Days a Week, p. 199.

[48]Chicago School of Civics and Philantrhopy, "Employment of Colored Women in Chicago," Crisis vol. 1, no. 3 (January, 1911), p. 25.

[49]This preference for day work is also evident in Johnsonl, "Household Employment in Chicago," p. 33; E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Family in Chicago (Chicago, 1932), p. 72. Frazier also points out that the diminishing number of single Black women is inversely related to the increase in day laborers. In Chicago the number of single Black women

decreased from 25.8% in 1900, 21.9% in 1910, to 17.6% in 1920. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census, 1920: Population, vol. II, p. 473; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Negro Population, 1790-1915, p. 275. Elizabeth Haynes has also abserved other effects of live-in service on Black women. She wrote that "one of the strains of such service often is the lack of break between the place of work and of living, which makes for resulting monotony and much lonliness. Much of a domestic workers' life is spent in the kitchen, in the laundry or on the premises of [her] employer." Haynes, "Negroes in Domestic Service," p. 430.

[50] Quoted in Negro in Chicago, p. 387.

[51] Dean Dutcher, The Negro in Modern Industrial Society: An Analysis of Change in the Occupation of Negro Workers, 1910-1920 (Lancaster, Penn., 1930), p. 63.

[52] This is based on Dutcher's findings, Ibid., p. 63.

[53] U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census, 1920: Manufactures, 1919, vol. X, p. 1038.

[54] Ibid., p. 1038.

[55] Negro in Chicago, p. 383.

[56] Report on Conditions of Women and Child Wage Earners in the United States, Senate Documents, 61st Congress, 2nd Session, No. 645, vol. XII (Wash. D.C.: GPO, 1911), p. 15; Marie L. Oberauer, "Working Hours of Wage Earning Women in Selected Industries in Chicago," Department of Labor, Bulletin of Bureau of Labor, no. 91 (Wash. D.C.: GPO, 1910), p. 883. Despite labor legislation, Chicago ranked among the worst in the U.S. in terms of administrating such laws. The main problem, other than the corrupt policies of the city, was the lack of coordination between Chicago's numerous inspection boards. E.H. Downey and Carl Hookstadt, "Report on the Administration of Laws Relating to Safety, Health, and Comfort in Places of Employment in the State of Illinois," (unpublished report, n.d.), U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, Archives, 1912-15, microfilm, reel 3; F.H. Bird, "Report of the Division of Public Agencies to the United States Commission on Industrial Relations," (unpublished report, 1914), U.S. commission on Industrial Relations, Archives, 1912-15, reel 1, pp. 5-6.

[57] Much of the information concerning the health conditions of workers in power laundries is derived from Report on Conditions of Women and Child Wage Earners in the U.S., Senate Documents, vol. XII, pp. 12-50. Although this study was completed four years before the outbreak of World

War I, these conditions are corroborated in "Pilgrim's Progress in a Laundry," part I and II, Life and Labor (April and May, 1920). Pilgrim is a pseudonym for a college woman who worked in various industries during the War and recorded her observations in the form of a diary or 'travellogue.'

[58]"Pilgrim's Progress in a Laundry," part II, Life and Labor vol. 10, no. 4, (April, 1920), p. 158.

[59]Poid pg.

[60]Negro in Chicago, pp. 383-84.

[61]U.S. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the U.S., 1910: Occupations, vol. 4 (Wash. D.C.: GPO, 1914), p. 546.

[62]U.S. Bureau of the Census, fourteenth Census of the U.S., 1920: Occupations, vol. 4 (Wash. D.C.: GPO, 1923), pp. 1079-80.

[63]Unfortunately, statistics on the number of Black women employed during the War were not available to me. However, Spero and Harris found that two of Chicago's leading packing houses employed about 4,000 Black workers in 1919. Spero and Harris, The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement (New York, 1931), p. 153. Alma Herbst shares my estimation of the numbers of Black women engaged in meat packing during the War. Herbst, The Negro in the Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry. The figures Herbst provides pertain to the mid 1920's.

[64]Herbst, op. cit., has found that when employment conditions were stable (i.e., when there was no reason to lay-off thousands of workers at a time) the turn-over rate of BLack women was very low. However, since his data concentrates on the mid 1920's, we must be cautious in drawing too many over-generalizations and universal conclusions. Nevertheless, it is clear (from the source material in footnote #65) that conditions had not changed much from the period of the War to the mid 1920's.

[65]U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Wages and Hours of Labor in the Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry, 1917 (Bulletin no. 252) (Wash. D.C.: GPO, 1919), pp. 1089-91; Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon, "The Employment of Women in Slaughtering and Meat Packing," Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Bulletin of the Women's Bureau, no. 88, (Wash. D.C.: GPO), p. 20.

[66]U.S. Department of Labor, Wages and Hours of Labor in the Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry, 1917, pp. 841-42.

[67]Pidgeon, "The Employment of Women in Slaughtering and Meat Packing," p. 20; See also U.S. Department of Labor, Wages and Hours of Labor in the Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry, 1917, p. 1093; Herbst, The Negro in the Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry, pp. 80-101.

[68]U.S. Department of Labor, Wages and Hours of Labor in the Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry, 1917, p. 885 and 860.

[69]Scott, Negro Migration During the War, p. 115.

[70]Elizabeth Pidgeon, op. cit., pp. 35-42, passim.

[71]Ibid., p. 39.

[72]Negro in Chicago, p. 384; Carl Sandburg, The Chicago Race Riot (New York, 1919), p. 38.

[73]Sandburg, The Chicago Race Riot, p. 37.

[74]Negro in Chicago, p. 383.

[75]Ibid., p. 387.

[76]Ibid., p. 382.

[77]Ibid., p. 382.

[78]Ibid., p. 382.

[79]Chicago Defender October 27, 1917. Examples abound, see Chicago Defender March 2, 1917, July 13 and 20, 1917; September 7 and 14, 1917; November 2 and 23, 1918.

[80]Negro in Chicago, pp. 391-92.

[81]Mary Roberts Smith, "The Negro Woman as an Industrial Factor," Life and Labor (January, 1917), p. 7.

[82]Walter C. Reckless, Vice in Chicago (Chicago, 1933), p. 25.

[83]Ibid., p. 31.

[84]Henri, Black Migration, p. 144.

[85]Smith, "The Negro Woman as an Industrial Factor," p. 8.

[86]The racism of the AF of L's bureaucracy cannot be denied. Samuel Gompers, president of the Federation for over

a quarter of a century, has said that as far as he can help it, "the caucasians are not going to let their standard of living be destroyed by negroes, Chinamen, Japs, or any other." American Federationist (September, 1905), p. 636, also quoted in Philip Foner and Ronald Lewis (eds.), The Black Worker: A Documentary History From Colonial Times to the Present, vol. 5 (Philadelphia, 1980), p. 124. Examples of the AF of L's longstanding tradition of Jim Crowism can be found in Spero and Harris, The Black Worker, pp. 53-104; Philip Foner, American Socialism and Black Americans (Westport, 1977), pp. 102, 133, 262, 307-9, 342; Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States, vol. 3 (New York, 1964), pp. 369-70, 381-83; Foner, Organized Labor and the Black Worker (New York, 1982); Ray Marshall, The Negro and Organized Labor (New York, 1965), pp. 141-35; Marshall, The Negro Worker (New York, 1967), pp. 17-23; Marc Karson and Ronald Radosh, "The American Federation of Labor and the Negro Worker, 1894-1949," in The Negro and the American Labor Movement, (ed.) Julius Jacobson (New York, 1968); Bernard Mandel, Samuel Gompers and the Negro Worker, 1886-1914," Journal of Negro History 40 (January, 1955), pp. 34-60.

[87] Quoted in Norfolk Journal and Guide September 29, 1917.

[88] Foner, Women and the Labor Movement, p. 313; Gladys Boone, The Women's Trade Union League (New York, 1968), pp. 64-64; Alice Henry, Women and the Labor Movement (New York, 1923), p. 110.

[89] See THe Women's Trade Union League of Illinois, 1907-1908 (Chicago, 1908); The Women's Trade Union League of Chicago, 1908-1909 (Chicago, 1909); Annual Report of Women's Trade Union League of Chicago, June 1915-June 1916 (Chicago, 1916). These pamphlets are available inthe Women's Trade Union League Papers, Series 9, Microfilm, Reel 9.

[90] Negro in Chicago, p. 367.

[91] This was Irene Goins. During and after the War she organized Black women in the Stockyards Labor Council. William Tuttle Jr., Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919 (New York, 1970), p. 127; The Butcher Workman 4 (October, 1918), p. 5.

[92] Annual Report of the Women's Trade Union League of Chicago, June 1915-June 1916, p. 15, WTUL Papers, Series 9, Microfilm, Reel 9; "The National Women's Trade Union League of America Notes: CHicago League," Life and Labor vol. 6, no. 1 (January, 1916).

[93] See for instance Helen E. Zuhlke, "What Household Workers Can Do," Life and Labor vol. 5, no. 12 (December, 1915), pp. 187-88.

[94] See N. Sue Weiler, "The Uprising in Chicago: The Men's Garment Workers Strike, 1910-1911," in A Needle, A Bobbin, A Strike: Women Neddles Workers in America (ed.), M. Jensen and Sue Davidson, (Philadelphia, 1984); Wilfred Carsel, A History of the Chicago Ladies Garment Workers Union (Chicago, 1940), pp. 48-55.

[95] See Table II.

[96] John Laslett, Labor and the Left: A Study of Socialist and Radical Influences in the American Labor Movement, 1881-1924 (New York, 1970), p. 121. Laslett also points out that the Messenger, edited by two Black Socialists, A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, received a $300.00 donation from ILGWU. Randolph's support for ILGWU is treated in Jervis Anderson, A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait (New York, 1972), p. 272.

[97] Wilfred Carsel, op. cit., pp. 95-101; Mary O'Reilly, "The Waist and Dress Makers Strike," Life and Labor vol. 7, no. 3 (March 1917), pp. 38-39; WTUL of Chicago, Bulletin vol. 6, no. 3, 4 and 5 (March-May, 1917) available in WTUL Papers, series 9, microfilm, reel 9.

[98] Quoted in Negro in Chicago, p. 414.

[99] Herbst, The Negro in the Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry, p. 29; William Z. Foster, "How Life Has Been Brought into the Stockyards," Life and Labor vol. 7, no. 4 (April, 1918), p. 63; William Z. Foster, American Trade Unionism: Principles and Organization, Strategy and Tactics (New York, 1947), pp. 22-23; Spero and Harris, The Black Worker, pp. 275-276. The impetus for the Stockyards Labor Council came from local 453 of the Railway Carmen and local 87 of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen's Union.

[100] Foster, "How Life Has Been Brought into the Stockyards," p. 63; Herbst, op. cit., p. 30. Local 651 made the best of its all Black constituency and, in fact, its activities took on very nationalistic overtones. In 1919 it opened its own cooperative store -- the first totally black owned store of its kind in Chicago. Vinculum coopative Store was located in the heart of the Southside. forrester B. Washington, "Chicago Negroes Launch Cooperative Store," Life and Labor vol. 9, no. 7 (July, 1919), p. 179.

[101] Olive M. Sullivan, "The Women's Part in the Stockyards Organization Works," _Life and Labor_ vol. 7, no. 6 (May 1918), copy available in _WTUL Papers_, series 9, reel 7.

[102] _The Butcher Workman_ vol. 4 (October, 1918), p. 5; also quoted in Tuttle, _Race Riot_, p. 127.

[103] Herbst, op. cit., p. 30. William Z. Foster's attitude toward Black workers was representative of this strain of thought. Foster, in fact, had justified the existence of Jim Crow locals by saying that African-Americans were "very suspicious and distrustful of the unions." Foster, "How Life Has Been Brought Back into the Stockyards," p. 64.

[104] _Negro in Chicago_, p. 423. See also, _Chicago Defender_ Februray 3, 1917; _Chicago Daily Tribune_ March 13, 1917; _Pittsburgh Courier_ March 22, 1917; Herbst, op. cit., pp. 35-36; Spero and Harris, op. cit., pp. 272-73.

[105] _Negro in Chicago_, p. 423.

[106] Spero and Harris, _The Black Worker_, p. 273.

[107] August Meier, _Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915_ (Ann Arbor, 1966), p. 134.

[108] _Chicago Defender_ August 22, 1914.

[109] Ida B. Wells, _Crusade for Justice_, pp. 330-333; Thomas Lee Philpott, _The Slum and the Ghetto: Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle Class Reform, CHicago, 1880-1930_ (New York, 1978), p. 303.

[110] Allan Spear, _Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920_ (Chicago, 1967), pp. 101-102.

[111] _Chicago Defender_ September 23, 1916.

[112] _Chicago Defender_ July 15, 1916.

[113] _Negro in Chicago_, p. 147; Arvah Strickland, _History of the CHicago Urban League_ (Chicago, 1966), p. 42.

[114] State of Illinois, Department of Labor, _Third Annual Report_ (Springfield, 1921); Scott, _Negro Migration During the War_, p. 104; _Chicago Defender_ April 28, 1917, December 8, 1917, March 6, 1918.

[115] Strickland, _History of the Chicago Urban League_, p. 44.

[116] _Negro in Chicago_, p. 147.

[117]Ibid., p. 147.

[118]Chicago Defender§ Fegruary 22, 1919.

[131]Quoted in Negro in Chicago, p. 402.

[132]Haynes, "Negroes in Domestic Service," p. 393.

[133]This story is recounted by Washington in "Reconstruction and the Colored Woman," p. 3.

[134]Negro in Chicago, p. 387.

[135]State of Illinois, Department of Labor, Third Annual Report, p. 16.

[136]Elinora Manso, "War Activities Among Colored Women of Chicago," Chicago Broad Ax December 21, 1918; Chicago Defender April 19, 1919; Monroe Work (comp.), "Negro Patriotism," Southern Workman 48 (October, 1919), pp. 510-511; Jane Lang Scheiber and Harry N. Scheiber, "The Wilson Administration and the Wartime Mobilization of Black AMericans, 1917-1918," Labor History vol. 10, no. 3 (1969).

[137]Roscoe C. Jamison, "Negro Soldiers," Crisis 14 (September, 1917), p. 249; For more on the disappointments of the war's end to Blacks, see "Close Ranks," Crisis 16 (July, 1918), p. 111; Chicago Defender April 7, 1917; Tuttle, Race Riots, pp. 216-241; "A Report on the Chicago Riot By an Eye-Witness," pp. 11-12.

[138]Washington, "Reconstruction and the Colored Woman," p. 7.

[139]Quoted in Eugene Staley, History of the Illinois State Federation of Labor (Chicago, 1930), p. 353. For more on the national unrest known today as the 'Red Scare' see Murray, Red Scare; Tuttle, Race Riot, especially the last chapter.

[140]National Urban League, Negro Membership in American Labor Unions (New York, 1930), p. 133.

[141]New Majority August 9, 1919; Spero and Harris, op. cit., p. 273.

[142]New Majority July 12, 1919; Herbst, op. cit., pp. 41-43; Spero and Harris, op. cit., pp. 275-76.

[143]New Majority July 12, 1919.

[144]Herbst, op. cit., p. 51.

[145] Chicago Whip January 24, 1920; also quoted in Spear Black Chicago, p. 163.

[146] For more on the strike of 1921-22, see Spero an Harris, op. cit., pp. 280-82; Herbst, op. cit., pp. 44-49 Benjamin Stolberg, "The Stock-Yard Strike," Nation January 25 1922, p. 92.

[147] Negro in Chicago, p. 415; Spero and Harris, op. cit., p. 338.

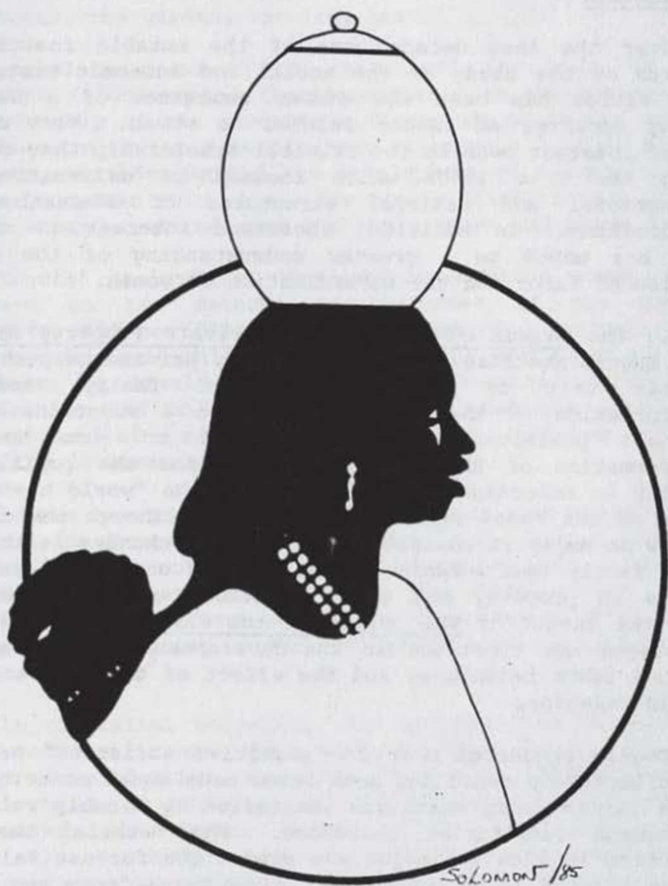
[148] Negro in Chicago, p. 415; Spero and Harris, op. cit., p. 338.

[149] Evans, "The Negro in Chicago Industries," p. 16.

[150] Ibid., p. 16.

[151] Spero and Harris, op. cit., p. 338.

[152] Negro in Chicago, p. 414. Apprenticeship wages were as low as $7.00 to $9.00 per week for Black women during the early 1920's. At the same time, the Urban League estimated that a 'living wage' in Chicago was somewhere around $15.00 per week. Evans, "The Negro in Chicago Industries," p. 16.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