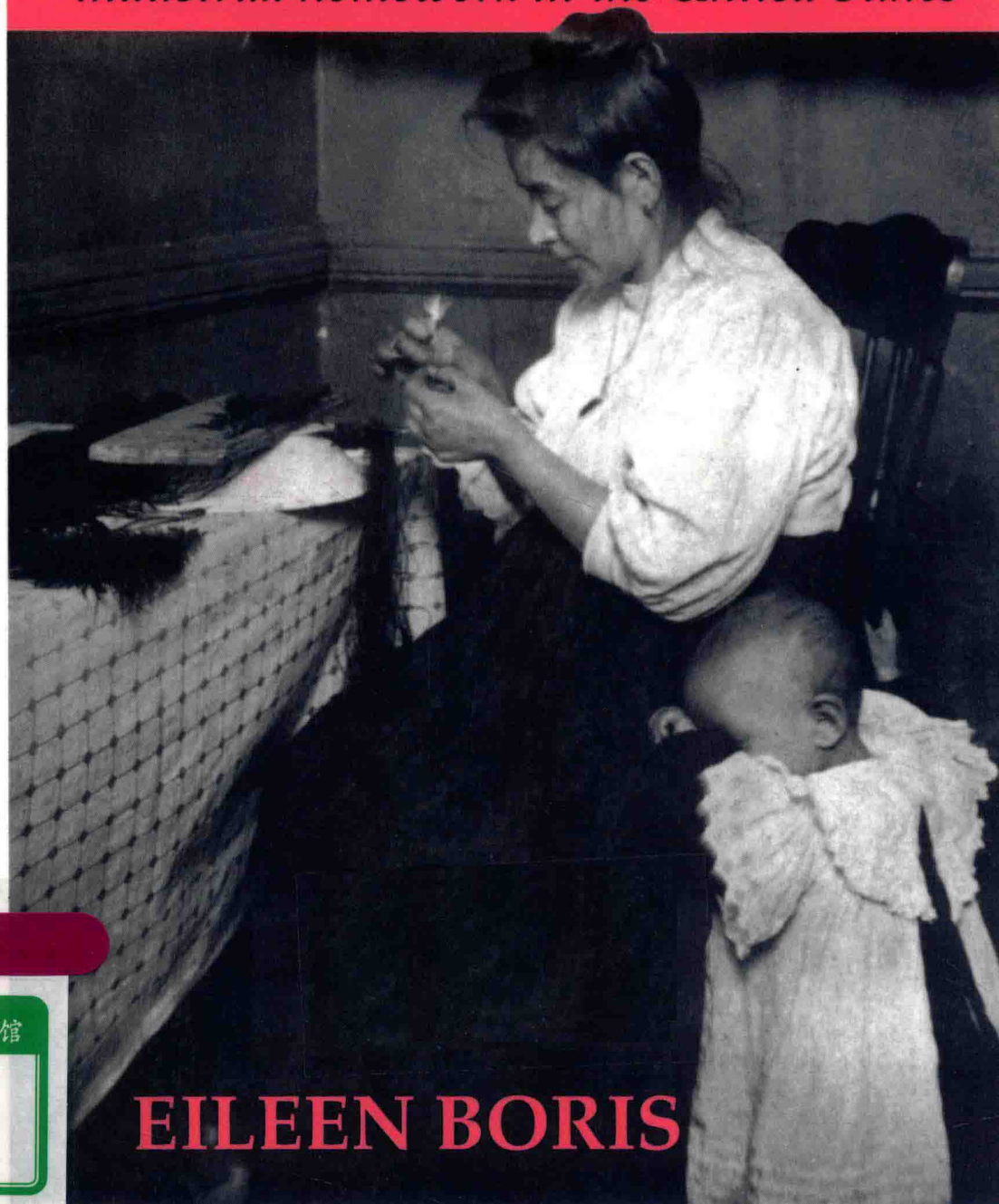


HOME TO WORK

*Motherhood and the politics of
industrial homework in the United States*



EILEEN BORIS

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Motherhood and
the politics of industrial homework
in the United States

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Howard University



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In the minds of most people, the home has stood apart from the world of work. By bringing the factory or office home, homework challenges this division. Employers, trade unionists, male and female reformers, and government administrators have vigorously debated the evils of homework. *Home to Work* restores the voices of homeworking women, mostly mothers of small children, to the century-long struggle over their labor.

From the 1870s, when New York cigarmakers attempted to end tenement competition, through the minimum wage campaigns of the National Consumers' League in the early twentieth century, to New Deal prohibitions in the 1930s, gender ideology shaped the battle over homework. After World War II, the white-collar home-based labor force grew; by the 1980s the white middle-class mother at the keyboard had replaced the victimized immigrant as the symbol of homework. Presented as a solution to the work and family dilemma of our time, Reaganite deregulation of homework attempted to dismantle the New Deal legacy.

While men's right to freely dispose of their labor inhibited the regulation of homework in the late nineteenth century, by the late twentieth century the government's attitude toward homework had come full circle – women's right to employment now undermined its prohibition. Economic and political justice, whether based on rights to homework or rights as workers, will depend on homeworkers becoming visible as wage earners who happen to mother.

Home to work



Figure 1. Luther Bradley, "Sacred Motherhood," lithograph, 1907. Courtesy of the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College. Exhibited at the Chicago Industrial Exhibit of 1907, this image symbolized sweated motherhood for a generation of women reformers who sought to end homework, organize the garment industry, and relieve working-class mothers of their double burden of wage earning and family maintenance. The women's Trade Union League used it on a postcard to raise funds to support striking workers in 1910–11.

For Nelson and Daniel



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Neither could I have written this book without the generosity and help of archivists and librarians. Most of all I thank Jerry Hess, Bill Creech, and Richard Boyden of the National Archives. I depended on the staffs of the Manuscript and Photographs divisions of the Library of Congress; the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe; the Labor-Management Documentation Center, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University; the ILGWU Archives (now housed at Cornell); the New York State Archives and Library, Albany; Illinois State Historical Society; Chicago Historical Society; University Archives, Alexander Library, Rutgers University; Manuscripts, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago; Manuscripts, Wisconsin Historical Society; Tamiment Library, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University; Samuel Gompers Papers, University of Maryland; Office of the Historian and Library, U.S. Department of Labor; Library, New York Department of Labor; and Special Collections, University of Illinois, Chicago.

I thank those who gave permission for use of parts of my previously published articles. Most of Chapter 1 appeared under the same title in Ava Baron, ed., *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 114-41. Some of Chapter 4 is reworked from "Tenement Homework on Army Uniforms: The Gendering of Industrial Democracy During World War I," *Labor History* 32 (Spring 1991), 231-52. Chapter 6 contains material from "Black Women and Paid Labor in

the Home: Industrial Homework in Chicago During the 1920s," in Eileen Boris and Cynthia R. Daniels, *Homework: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Paid Labor at Home* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 3–52. Chapter 7 greatly expands upon "Regulating Industrial Homework: The Triumph of 'Sacred Motherhood,'" *Journal of American History* 71 (Mar. 1985), 745–63. Chapters 9 and 11 rework part of "The Regulation of Homework and the Devolution of the Postwar Labor Standards Regime: Beyond Dichotomy," in C. Tomlins and A. King, eds., *Labor Law in America: Historical and Critical Essays* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 260–82. Chapter 11 also reuses part of "Homework and Women's Rights: The Case of the Vermont Knitters," *Signs* 13 (Autumn 1987), 98–120, © the University of Chicago, all rights reserved. Captions under illustrations provide appropriate permissions.

In taking my story up to yesterday's headlines, I have gained from the willingness of those in the field to share documents, information, and expertise. I am indebted to the late Hugh McDaid, chief of the sweatshop division of the New York State Department of Labor, who gave me access to old files that should have been in the archives but remain in New York City. I am truly sad that he was unable to see this book. ILGWU vice-president Susan Cowell always was willing to provide me with union perspectives and, at the last minute, a photograph. I've learned much from our joint participation on panels over the years. I also must thank Joyce Durgerian, a senior labor standards investigator at the New York Department of Labor; Dennis Chamot of the AFL-CIO Professional Employee Division; and Claire White, Hank Gudza, and Justin McLaurey of the U.S. Department of Labor. I had the privilege of knowing Clara Beyer in the years before her death in 1991; she proved inspirational.

In April 1989 the Ford Foundation sent me to an international conference on home-based labor at the Ghandi Labour Institute in Ahmedabad, India. This experience enriched my assessment of the history of industrial homework in the United States. Renana Jhabvala, secretary of the Self-Employed Women's Association, introduced me to a successful model of homemaker organization; she offers an example of the engaged life that benefits us all. Lisa Prügl also has clarified my thinking on the international context of homework. I look forward to continuing the struggle along with Renana, Lisa, and other activists and researchers seeking to gain ILO protection of homeworkers.

A number of scholars over the years have read and commented on preliminary papers. Although I have not always agreed with or been able to incorporate their advice, I have benefited from it. I especially would like to thank Paula Baker, Mary Francis Berry, Kathleen Christensen, Dorothy Sue Cobble, Cynthia Costello, Cynthia Rae Daniels, Sarah Deutsch, Nancy Schrom Dye, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Alice Kessler-Harris, Nancy Hewitt, Ann Lane, Sybil Lipschultz, Suzanne Mettler, Sonya Michel, Phyllis Palmer, Karen

Sacks, Philip Scranton, Amy Dru Stanley, Landon Storrs, Arnold Taylor, and Christopher Tomlins. Deborah Elkin, Cynthia Harrison, and Joanne Meyerowitz shared documents. Cecilia Buckley provided me with newspaper material on New Haven and Bridgeport. At the Wilson Center, Rebecca Toth and Paul Frymer proved able research assistants. Ruel Schiller checked the form of my legal citations. Leslie Rowland's pioneer research on the cigarmakers, now housed at the Gompers Papers, allowed me to write a better chapter. Martha Fineman and her Feminism and Legal Theory conferences, particularly the first one in 1985, served as midwife to my thought. So have the feminist theory reading groups I participated in during the 1980s. I owe the most to those who have carefully read the entire manuscript: Ava Baron, Vivien Hart, Wendy Sarvasy, and Kathryn Kish Sklar. This book is better for their efforts. I would also like to thank Frank Smith, my editor, and the staff at Cambridge University Press, especially production editor Katharita Lamoza. Jeff Danziger came through with a redrawing of his Vermont Knitters cartoon.

Nelson Lichtenstein took time away from his own manuscript to read numerous drafts. His research and writing offer a model to which I can only aspire. He continued to show that parenting need not be restricted to mothers and nurturing to women. Yaz had nothing to do with this manuscript and Daniel had everything to do with it. I began my research as a nursing mother which I sometimes think made the Kathryn Budd case stick out of the mass of the NRA Homework Committee Papers. Nelson found those papers for me; so he is partially responsible. My analysis, however, came out of a desire to combine feminist theory and historical research to address the "double day" of working women, how "home" and "work" interconnect despite their ideological separation. The deregulation of homework under the Reagan administration brought the past and present together. Nelson and Daniel remind me why we must get it better, if we can't get it right.

Abbreviations

AALL	Papers of the American Association for Labor Legislation, Labor-Management Documentation Center, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University
Abbott Papers	Papers of Grace and Edith Abbott, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago
ACWA	Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America
ACWA Papers	Papers of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, Labor-Management Documentation Center, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University
AFL	American Federation of labor
AGLO	Association of Governmental Labor Officials
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
Baker Papers	Papers of Newton D. Baker, LC
Beyer Papers	Papers of Clara Mortenson Beyer, SL
BPWF	Business and Professional Women's Federation
Burlington Hearings	Official Report of Proceedings before the Office of Administrative Law Judges of the USDOL, Docket no. FLSA, "In the Matter of: Public Hearing to Commence Labor Department Review of 'Home-worker Rules,' " Burlington, Vt., Jan. 1, 1981, Office of Special Minimum Wage, Division of Labor Standards, DOL, Washington, D.C.
CBB	<i>Bulletin of the Children's Bureau</i>
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CLC Papers	Papers of the Consumers' League of Connecticut, SL
CLM Papers	Papers of the Consumers' League of Massachusetts, SL
CLNJ Papers	Papers of the Consumers' League of New Jersey, Alexander Library, Manuscript Collection, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ
CLU	Central Labor Union
CMIU	Cigar Makers' International Union

CMOJ	Cigar Makers' Official Journal
CMPU	Cigar Makers' Progressive Union
Corcoran Papers	Papers of Thomas G. Corcoran, LC
CTLA	Chicago Trade and Labor Assembly
D.C. Hearings	U.S. DOL, "In the Matter of: A Public Hearing to Commence Labor Department Review of 'Home-worker Rules,' " Feb. 17, 1981, Washington, D.C., Office of Special Minimum Wage, DOL, Washington, D.C.
District 65 Papers	Papers of the Distributive, Processing and Office Workers of America, Tamiment Library, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University
DLS	Division of Labor Standards
DOL	Department of Labor
DOL Files	Material Relating to Homework in Knitted Outerwear, Office of Special Minimum Wage, Division of Labor Standards, DOL, Washington, D.C.
DOL Library	Library, Frances Perkins Building, DOL, Washington, D.C.
DMMCA	Direct Mail Master Contract Association
DPOWA	Distributive, Processing and Office Workers of America
Dubinsky Papers	Papers of David Dubinsky, ILGWU Archives, Labor-Management Documentation Center, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University
ERA	Equal Rights Amendment
FERA	Federal Emergency Relief Administration
FIC	Factory Investigating Commission
FLSA <i>Joint Hearings</i>	"Fair Labor Standards Act of 1937," Joint Hearings before the Committee on Education and Labor, U.S. Senate, and the Committee on Labor, House of Representatives, 75th Cong., 1937 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1937)
Ford Committee	House of Representatives, 50th Cong., 1st sess., <i>Testimony Taken by the Select Committee of the House of Representatives to Inquire into the Alleged Violating of the Laws Prohibiting the importation of Contract Laborers, Paupers, Convicts, and Other Classes</i> (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1889)
FS	<i>Feminist Studies</i>
Gompers Papers	Papers of Samuel Gompers, LC
GPO	Government Printing Office

Hatch Hearings	Hearing before the Subcommittee on Labor of the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, U.S. Senate, 98th Cong., 2d sess., "Amending the Fair Labor Standards Act to Include Industrial Homework," Feb. 9, 1984 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1984)
HC Records	Records of the Homework Committee, NRA, RG9, NA
HH Scrapbooks	Papers of Hull House, Special Collections, University Library, University of Illinois at Chicago
HSW Papers	Papers of Helen Sumner Woodbury, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.
IAFINA	International Association of Factory Inspectors of North America
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IJWU	International Jewelry Workers Union
ILGWU	International Ladies' Garment Workers Union
ILO	International Labor [Labour] Organization
IMA Papers	Papers of the Illinois Manufacturers Alliance, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Ill.
<i>JAH</i>	<i>Journal of American History</i>
LC	Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Manuscript Division
LHTS	Lewis Hine Tenement House Scrapbook, Prints and Photographs Collection, Library of Congress
LWV	League of Women Voters
Miller Papers	Papers of Frieda S. Miller, SL
Morgan Scrapbook	Papers of Tommy and Elizabeth Morgan, Illinois State Historical Society, Springfield, Ill.
NA	National Archives, Washington, D.C.
Nathan Scrapbook	Scrapbooks of Maud Nathan, SL
NCL	National Consumers' League
NCLC	National Child Labor Committee
NCLC Papers	Papers of the National Child Labor Committee, LC
NCL Papers	Papers of the National Consumers' League, microfilm edition, LC
NCLVF	NCL Vertical File, SL
NCMA	National Cigar Manufacturers' Association
New York Hearing	NYDOL, "Public Hearing on Industrial Homework," transcript of proceedings, Apr. 12, 1981, NYDOL, Brooklyn, N.Y.
NRA	National Recovery Administration
NYCL	Consumers' League of New York
NYCLC	New York Child Labor Committee

NYCLC Papers	Papers of the New York Child Labor Committee, NYSL
NYCL Papers	Papers of the New York Consumers' League, Labor-Management Documentation Center, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University
NYDOL	New York State Department of Labor
NYDOL Library	Files on Homework, Sweatshops and Minimum Wages, NYDOL Library, Brooklyn, N.Y.
NYSA	New York State Archives, Albany
NYSL	New York State Library, Albany
NYWTUL	New York Women's Trade Union League
"Reemergence of Sweatshops"	Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, "The Reemergence of Sweatshops and the Enforcement of Wage and Hour Standards," 97th Cong., 1st and 2d sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1982).
<i>Report on Capital and labor</i>	U.S. Senate, Committee on Education and Labor, <i>Report Upon the Relations between Capital and Labor</i> (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1885)
<i>Report on Sweating</i>	House of Representatives, 52nd. Cong., 2d. Sess., <i>Committee on Manufacturers Report on the Sweating System</i> , N.2309 Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1893)
<i>Report on Women and Children</i>	<i>Report on Condition of Women and Children Wage Earners in the United States</i> (Washington: GPO, 1911)
RG1	Records of the War Labor Policies Board, NA
RG9	Records of the National Recovery Administration, NA
RG46	Records of the U.S. Senate, NA
RG86	Records of the Women's Bureau, NA
RG102	Records of the Children's Bureau, NA
RG107	Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, NA
RG155	Records of the Wage and Hour Administration, NA
RG174	General Records of the Department of Labor, 1907-1942 (Chief Clerk's Files)
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
<i>Signs</i>	<i>Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society</i>
SL	Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass.
Smith Papers	Papers of Hattie H. Smith, SL
TH	Transcript of Hearings, NRA, NA
TLA	Textile Labour Association
TUC	Trade Union Congress
TVA	Tennessee Valley Authority

UGWA	United Garment Workers of America
Umhey Papers	Papers of Frederick Umhey, ILGWU Archives, Labor-Management Documentation Center, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University
UOPWA	United Office and Professional Workers of America
WBB	<i>Bulletin of the U.S. Women's Bureau</i>
WHD	Wage and Hour Division
WIS	Women in Industry Service
WMC	War Manpower Commission
WPS	Wisconsin Physicians Services Insurance Corporation
WTUL	National Women's Trade Union League
WTUL Papers	Papers of the National Women's Trade Union League, microfilm edition, LC, SL

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