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To cite this article: Danielle Phillips-Cunningham (2020): Slaving Irish 'Ladies' and black 'Towers of strength in the labor world': race and women's resistance in domestic service, Women's History Review, DOI: [10.1080/09612025.2020.1757864](https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2020.1757864)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2020.1757864>



Published online: 13 May 2020.



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# Slaving Irish 'Ladies' and black 'Towers of strength in the labor world': race and women's resistance in domestic service

Danielle Phillips-Cunningham

## ABSTRACT

Southern Black and Irish immigrant women represented the majority of domestic workers in US northeastern cities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This article argues that these women engaged in discursive resistance to make the argument that domestic workers in their respective communities were uniquely deserving of labor rights. Their approaches and goals, however, were distinct. Irish domestics used slavery as a metaphor to whiten themselves in comparison to Black domestics, and position themselves as even whiter than their employers. Slavery was not a metaphor for Black women. Victoria Earle Matthews and other southern Black women argued that they had been exploited for over two hundred years and their labor rights were thereby long overdue. This comparative history is intended to trace and advance discussion about the persistence of race in women's labor struggles historically and today.

## KEYWORDS

African American women; Irish immigrant women; domestic workers;; slavery; women's resistance; migrations; US northeast; women's labors; activism; whiteness

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... the horrible days of slavery, out of which I came, seem as a dream that is told, some horror incredible. The black woman who came out of slavery in the last thirty years, have accomplished tremendous results as farm-laborers and house servants, and they deserve the admiration of mankind for the glorious work that they have accomplished. –Victoria Earle Matthews<sup>1</sup>

The most a servant gets in Flatbush is plenty of hard work. In a family of five or six, they expect the 'maid' to do the work of the whole house, from attic to cellar, including the chopping of wood, and taking care of the furnace ... Working in some of the houses of Flatbush is nothing short of slavery. –An Irish Servant Girl<sup>2</sup>

Southern Black migrant and Irish immigrant women were among the most vocal thinkers on the racial dilemmas of domestic service in US northeastern cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Domestic service was a racially stigmatized occupation rooted in the history of slavery, and the women who were concentrated in it were marked as racially inferior to white Anglo Saxon Protestants, unbefitting of female respectability, and undeserving of living wages and labor protections. Migrant women from non-WASP backgrounds also faced the racial stigma of being 'outsiders.' Victoria Earle Matthews, 'An Irish Servant Girl,' and other Irish immigrant and southern Black women knew the power of racial discourse in a country founded on slavery, a

totalizing ideological and economic institution that shaped the segmented labor market well after emancipation.<sup>3</sup>

In this article, I argue that Irish immigrant and southern Black migrant women used slavery as a mobilizing metaphor to challenge and redefine gendered class and racial hierarchies that justified the labor exploitation of women from their respective communities. I use an intersectional lens to compare southern Black and Irish immigrant women's use of slavery as a trope to capture the intellectual work that women did to change working conditions in domestic service. I also aim to expand the terrain for historicizing the racial dynamics between laboring women and how women characterized those relationships.

Victoria Earle Matthews, a Fort Valley, Georgia native and co-founder of the first traveler's aid service and lodging home for Black migrant women in New York City, was among the most outspoken supporters of domestic service reform. Her commitment to improving the working conditions of domestic workers was steeped in her racial pride, which derived from her experiences as an enslaved girl and domestic worker. In her speech 'The Awakening of the Afro-American Woman,' given before a predominantly white audience at the annual Society of Christian Endeavor convention, Matthews pressed the urgent and morally just cause of advocating for Black laboring women.<sup>4</sup> She inserted Black women into the advancement narrative of the Progressive era to proclaim that 'ex-slave' domestic worker and sharecropping women were deserving of labor rights because they had achieved tremendous accomplishments for their communities and the nation after having suffered 'the nightmare of 250 years of self-effacement and debasement.'<sup>5</sup>

An anonymous writer under the penname 'An Irish Servant Girl' similarly referenced slavery to convince the readership of *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* newspaper to support higher wages and recreational time for Irish immigrant domestic workers. She likened her experiences to those of enslaved African American household servants to make legible the exploitative demand that Irish servants 'work hard day after day' from '6 in the morning to 10 in the evening' and 'wear her sweetest smile from one week's end to another' while always at the beck and call of her employers.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the letter, An Irish Servant Girl had crafted a foundation from which she could argue that she and her Irish sisters deserved labor rights. Slave-like working conditions were beneath them, because they were actually the respectable ladies of the home.

Irish immigrant and southern Black migrant women were organic and strategic thinkers on the subject of race, migration, and labor, an intellectual labor that is often credited to the men of their time.<sup>7</sup> The rich body of social histories about household employment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have documented domestic workers' collective and individual acts of resistance to low wages, dangerous working conditions, and sexual abuse.<sup>8</sup> In emphasizing the agency of domestic workers, scholars have not paid attention to their intellectual labors and those of women who advocated for them. This article highlights how Irish immigrant and southern Black migrant women evoked slavery to construct public discourses that challenged the underlying racial stigma of domestic service that justified labor and sexual exploitation in the occupation.

Irish serving women inserted themselves into Progressive reformers' national outcry to protect white working-class women and girls from labor exploitation by evoking white slavery and working ladyhood to explain the treatment of Irish immigrant women in domestic service.<sup>9</sup> Black women's racial project was two-fold and lasted decades longer than

that of Irish immigrant women. They had the much larger task of redefining what it meant to be southern, migrant, and wage-earning Black women in a nation where they were defined as the very antithesis to ladyhood and US citizenship.<sup>10</sup> They also labored in a region where whites (both native born and immigrant) were just as hostile to Blacks as white southerners. Southern Black women inserted racial and gender uplift and equality goals into labor reform discourses. They argued that Black domestic workers were uniquely deserving of labor rights and bodily protection as respectable and productive US citizens who had been exploited for over two centuries as enslaved laborers.

Whether coming from formerly enslaved women, descendants of enslaved people, or immigrants not initially accepted as white, slavery was a powerful trope that persisted in women's writings and community organizing against the inhumane working conditions of domestic service. Reading the texts that women left behind through an intersectional lens charts new pathways for tracing women's meaning-making work regarding race, migration, and women's labor.

### **Irish immigrant and African American women's migrations**

There are overlaps between Irish immigrant and southern Black women's labor histories rooted in slavery, migration, and domestic service. Slavery was foundational to the political economy of the United States at the time when Irish women arrived in US northeastern cities to escape the potato famine. Slavery determined people's racial identities, the type of work that they did, and the definition of their labor. The term 'servant' was racially stigmatized because it was associated with slavery and Black women. White American-born women who worked in private northern homes before the arrival of the Irish preferred to be called 'the help' to distance themselves from free Black women and enslaved women in the North and South.<sup>11</sup> Irish women, however, were servants in the eyes of their employers, and the occupation itself 'seemed more menial because the Irish dominated it.'<sup>12</sup> As lesser beings, supposedly immune to pain, they became fodder for medical experimentation much like enslaved Black women in the South..<sup>13</sup> Mainstream thought questioned whether the Irish were even white.<sup>14</sup>

Of all the ethnic and racial groups of women who migrated to northeastern cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Irish immigrant, southern Black, and Afro Caribbean women were most likely to be concentrated in domestic service.<sup>15</sup> Irish women continued migrating to the United States in record numbers into the early twentieth century. Approximately 3.5 million Irish immigrants lived in the United States by 1900 and the majority of the newly arrived Irish women were single and worked in domestic service in northeastern cities.<sup>16</sup> In 1900, the U.S. Immigration Commission reported that 71 percent of Irish immigrant women in the labor force were classified as 'domestic and personal workers' and 54 percent were classified as 'servants and waitresses.'<sup>17</sup> By 1912 and 1913, nearly 87 percent of the Irish women who had migrated to America worked in some form of private or public domestic service. As late as 1920, Irish-born women still constituted 43 percent of white, female, foreign-born domestic servants in the United States.<sup>18</sup> But Irish immigration slowed over the next decades after the establishment of the Irish Republic and increased opportunities elsewhere.<sup>19</sup>

Southern Black women, mostly single, separated, or widowed, settled primarily along the eastern shore in cities such as Washington. DC, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Newark,

Baltimore, and New York City in the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> Between 1870 and 1910, an average of 6,700 Black southerners migrated North annually. These numbers grew over the course of the twentieth century.<sup>21</sup> The northern Black population increased from 452, 818 in 1870–1,472,309 in 1920 because of migrations from the South.<sup>22</sup> Over 90 percent of southern Black women in the urban North labored as domestic workers.<sup>23</sup> They comprised 28.8 percent of all domestics in 1890; 45.8 percent by the 1920s; and dominated the ranks of domestic service in the North and South by the 1930s.<sup>24</sup> The decline in Irish immigration; Black migrations from the South; racial discrimination and segmentation in the women's labor sector; and an increased number of jobs available to white women in factories and shops contributed to Black women's monopoly over domestic service in the United States well into the 1960s.<sup>25</sup>

When they reached northern cities, Irish and Black women had to navigate a region fraught with its own political and socioeconomic unrest. Although native-born white northerners had boasted that the North was the pinnacle of American democracy and racial progress, they remained deeply ambivalent about Irish immigration, women's rights, and Black freedom following the Civil War. Journalists, employers, and cartoonists encapsulated these sentiments in portrayals of the Irish and southern newcomers as the source of the 'servant problem,' or the shortage of reliable, clean, honest, and efficient household servants.<sup>26</sup> Irish immigrant and Black women took matters into their own hands. They challenged racial and gendered discourses embedded in the complaints to demand better wages and working conditions.

### **Expanding whiteness: Irish immigrant working-class ladyhood**

White women labor reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries used 'wage slavery' and 'white slavery' as organizing metaphors to protest the labor and sexual exploitation of northern white women industrial workers.<sup>27</sup> Reformers thought that the abolition movement was successful and believed that filtering the labor experiences of white women through the history of slavery would be an effective strategy for illuminating their harsh working conditions and galvanizing support to remedy them.<sup>28</sup> The assumption underlying the metaphors was that it was a grave injustice for white women to endure labor and sexual exploitation. They were being treated like enslaved Blacks, although they were white women and slavery had been outlawed. As historian Lara Vapnek explained, 'wage slavery' affirmed occupational segregation and 'helped establish a common ground of whiteness' in an ethnically diverse white women's industrial workforce.<sup>29</sup>

Some Irish household workers created domestic servant assemblies that organized collectively with women factory and mill workers.<sup>30</sup> The assemblies had little impact on the labor reform movement since labor organizations committed most of their efforts to protesting the exploitation of white factory workers. Factory and mill work was at least recognized by the government as an industrial trade—or 'real' work—and regulating domestic service was seen as a violation of privacy in white middle and upper-class men's homes.<sup>31</sup> The visibility of significant Irish labor reform leaders in Ireland and the US could have given domestics a sense of ethnic, class, and racial solidarity with the labor movement.

With few platforms to represent their concerns, domestics used newspapers columns to identify practices of white slavery in household employment.<sup>32</sup> Their demands for laws to

protect domestics and insistence that employers recognize the superior characteristics of Irish domestics signal that the authors could have been appealing to lawmakers and employers to better their working conditions.

Reading letters through an intersectional lens illuminates questions about how Irish women saw themselves racially and in relationship to Black women while making their claims for labor rights. Who were Irish servants comparing themselves to when they described Irish women as more refined, resistant, hardworking, and virtuous than other 'nationalities' of women in domestic service? Also, which women's histories did Irish servants have in mind when they accused employers of subjecting them to slavery? Black women outnumbered other white domestic workers in northern cities by the late nineteenth century, and no other group of women in the occupation had been enslaved. While using slavery to affirm their whiteness, Irish women must have recognized that Black women's history was essential for illuminating persistent inequalities that even impacted white immigrant women like themselves. They rarely referred to Black women explicitly in their letters, yet the implication was always there.<sup>33</sup>

Irish women also did not mention the word 'white' in their claims to ladyhood, but the term 'lady' certainly evoked whiteness. As historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham argued, 'race is a metalanguage,' or a 'powerful, all-encompassing effect on the construction of gender, class, and sexuality' that 'distinguishes and positions groups vis-à-vis one another.'<sup>34</sup> Race is also a 'highly contested representation of relations ... by which individuals are identified and identify themselves.'<sup>35</sup> Irish women used racially-charged epithets such as 'lady' and 'respectable,' terms constructed during slavery to distinguish enslaved Black women from non-wage earning middle and upper class native-born white women, to elevate themselves above African American domestic workers and white women employers.<sup>36</sup>

When Irish women became the subject of public debate over domestic workers, they used racial metaphors to make the argument that they were white and thereby the most hardworking, respectable, and intelligent ladies in US households. An employer under the penname 'J.S.G.' wrote a letter to the *Brooklyn Eagle Daily* on March 6, 1897 that sparked voluminous letters from Irish immigrant women shortly afterwards. After detailing his experiences with employing a few Irish women, he concluded that Irish servants were 'dirty, impudent, careless, wasteful, and incompetent,' which were all characteristics that marked them as racially inferior.<sup>37</sup> J.S.G. doubled down on his racial claim about Irish servants when he noted that he had employed nearly every race of servants including the Scotch, English, American, German, 'Swede,' Norwegian, and even 'colored' women, but the Irish were the 'cheekiest, dirtiest, and most unreliable.' J.S.G. concluded his letter by appealing to lawmakers to pass a bill giving employers legal authority to fine servants or fire and them at a moment's notice to protect employers from 'from these bogus domestics.'<sup>38</sup>

Irish immigrant servants defied the racial epithets that J.S.G. and other employers associated with them. They asserted their white respectability by challenging the class respectability of male employers and housewives; constructing themselves as independent workers; identifying what they believed were the exceptional virtues of Irish women; and touting Irish servants as more resistant to slave-like working conditions than other 'nationalities,' or races of women. In her March 11, 1897 letter to J.S.G., the 'Irish Rambler' whitened her Irish serving sisters by calling into question J.S.G.'s masculinity.

She claimed that his treatment of Irish domestics showed that he was not a part of the class of 'well bread gentility,' an insult that suggests British disdain for American lack of refinement had traveled back through an Irish maid. If J.S.G. and other employers continued to engage in the egregious treatment of Irish servants, she predicted, 'then we will have what Abe Lincoln never thought of—white slavery ... It is very near that now.'<sup>39</sup>

H.M.E., another Irish servant who responded to J.S.G., also challenged his masculinity while expanding the class and citizenship boundaries of whiteness to include Irish servants. In her March 10, 1897 letter, she proposed a law to protect Irish servant girls from 'imposters' like J.S.G. 'who really are a disgrace to refined society.' After all, H.M.E. declared, poor working conditions were beneath the Irish, and they were not afraid to defend their honor if male employers crossed into their domestic domain. As she attested, 'Such a thing an Irish girl will object to, and what's more she will make such cranks keep out of the kitchen. Long live the Irish.'<sup>40</sup> H.M.E. and other Irish servants might have also constructed themselves as intolerant of aggressive male employers as an act of resistance to sexual harassment, an especially common experience for domestics.<sup>41</sup>

'An Irish Servant Girl' challenged J.S.G.'s characterization of Irish servants by elevating the Irish above other races of women. On March 9, 1897, she wrote, 'I know the feeling of hatred, under which is laboring against the spunky Irish girls. Of all the nationalities combined, they are the only nation that will not be tyrannized or domineered over ...,' and they will not allow 'tyrants' to 'try to make a slave out of them.'<sup>42</sup> 'D.M.B.' also made the case for better working conditions for Irish servants by questioning the respectability of housewives and distancing the Irish from other women. In her March 8, 1897 letter, she declared, 'Let the lady treat the girl right and she will be awarded for it ... Certainly the Irish will not do such slavish work as others may do, and they are right not to do a man's work.'<sup>43</sup> While the authors did not explicitly discuss Black women in their letters, their declaration that there were women who allowed employers to subject them to slave-like working conditions referred to them. Some Irish servants also whitened themselves by asserting their superiority to other European immigrant servants who were racialized as unquestionably white. A 'Plucky Irish Girl' opined, '... Irish girls are thorough, honest, splendid workers, and nothing would comfort me more than to have these upstarts depending on Swedes or Germans ...'<sup>44</sup>

Another letter signed 'Irish Servant Girl' whitened Irish domestics by challenging the native-born, white, male, property-owning ideal of US citizenship to include Irish women on the basis that they were hard-working household laborers. According to the author, Irish servants deserved better working conditions because they had actually 'done more to build up our American institutions than any other nationality in this country.'<sup>45</sup> The glaring omission of enslaved Black laborers in the construction of the United States could have been done purposefully to imply that labor reform for Irish women should have occurred before Black emancipation. According to some Irish domestics, they were the ones who were treated inhumanely. 'An Irish Servant Girl Who Has Seen Better Days' called into question the gentility of employers by accusing them of treating the Irish like animals, another implicit reference to slavery. A principle guiding the abolitionist movement was that Blacks were human but under slavery were regarded like animals. 'Regarding the criticism of Irish help,' the author asserted, 'They [employers] are not worthy of respectable girls, as they do not know how to treat them, and use them as though they are horses.'<sup>46</sup>

Perhaps taking cues from Irish domestic workers' resistance, cartoonists and journalists predicted that Irish servants were going to form a labor union or become housewives who

would turn the table on white American women by becoming their employers in the future. The image 'Mistress and Maid' from 1880 provides a visual illustration of an Irish immigrant servant inserting herself into white female respectability, and the prediction that it would eventually happen such that they would become housewives employing white American women as domestics.<sup>47</sup> The servant is drawn with animalistic features, but they seem less prominent in the later depiction of her signaling her transition into white female gentility. An 1899 *Puck* magazine image, 'A look ahead;—but not so very far ahead, either!' shows an Irish representative of the 'Help Lady's Union' interrupting a dinner party to show the guests a list of the organization's by-laws.<sup>48</sup> The delegate's broad, dark, and masculine facial and bodily features contrast with the 'delicate' and lighter features of the woman at the dinner table looking at her in horror and dismay. These humorous drawings illustrate the perceived racial and gender inferiority of Irish servants even as they recognize the arguments made by such women.

It was actually difficult for domestics to unionize because of the long hours and low wages of household work and minimal support from established labor organizations.<sup>49</sup> As historian Vanessa May argues, these barriers to organizing did not stop domestics from defying employers' expectations that they work in isolation from one another and refrain from social and cultural activities. Irish women were selective about where they worked so that they could socialize with other Irish domestics, maintain social relationships with friends, and participate in cultural activities such as Irish social dances.<sup>50</sup> Irish domestics, like African American and other European immigrant women, also formed social networks to determine where to work for the most favorable wages and working conditions.<sup>51</sup> These forms of resistance and Irish women's letters might have prompted the cartoonist to predict that an Irish domestic workers' union was on the horizon.





MISTRESS. "Excuse me, Bridget, for troubling you, but any time when convenient—would you please—if not too much trouble—just fix this fire a little—please?"



MISTRESS. "Bridget dear, is it quite warm enough for you? Don't you think I had better fix the fire a little?"

#### MISTRESS AND MAID.

### Black Clubwomen Fight for Better Conditions

Unprotected by the racial privileges afforded to Irish immigrant women, African American domestic workers in the late nineteenth century rarely aired their complaints in local newspapers. Openly challenging whites, even in the North, could result in violence.<sup>52</sup> Instead, they engaged in less public acts of resistance by individually negotiating with employers for living wages and refusing to work for employers who did not meet their demands. They also insisted on an end to their workday; made financial sacrifices to live in their own homes; and left their places of employment when employers arbitrarily changed their work hours and assignments.<sup>53</sup> In rare instances, Black migrant women demanded assistance from the local courts to prosecute employers who subjected them to slave-like working conditions. Sometimes, the courts worked in their favor.<sup>54</sup>

Most Black women could not rely on state and federal institutions or labor unions, however, for protection from exploitation. They depended on their own institutions and organizations to demand protection in domestic service. African American domestic workers established their own labor organizations when southern migrations increased in the 1920s and 30s. Until then, Black clubwomen were the most vocal and public advocates for labor rights for Black women in domestic service. They believed that the struggle to improve the working conditions of domestic workers was intrinsic to their larger movement for racial and gender equality.

Collectively, clubwomen built institutions, delivered speeches, and produced literature to undo the enduring impact of slavery that rendered Black women susceptible to labor and sexual exploitation in domestic service with little legal recourse. As Black feminist scholar Beverly Guy-Sheftall put it, clubwomen agreed that their working-class sisters 'departed from the ideal, but not because she was morally defective; rather she was the victim of sexual abuse and exploitation, and could therefore not be blamed for circumstances beyond her control.'<sup>55</sup> For clubwomen, some of those circumstances included

no legal protection for southern migrant women on their journeys to northern cities and while working in the private homes of white families.

Their approach was complex. Clubwomen could be elitist, maternalistic, and harsh critics of their laboring sisters, and some working-class women rebelled against clubwomen's politics of respectability and visions for them as domestic workers.<sup>56</sup> Clubwomen were also not monolithic in ideology, practice, and lived experience. The groundbreaking collection *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, published in 1995, laid the groundwork for delving deeper into the diverse theories and life histories of Black clubwomen and frames the approach of this study.<sup>57</sup> 'Race women' kneaded together discourses, memories of slavery, and domestic workers' personal experiences to produce the most progressive ideas and institutions regarding race and women's labor of their time, and arguably today.<sup>58</sup> They advocated for African American women laborers when no one else would, nor cared to.<sup>59</sup> The following section focuses on strands of their transformative intellectual work and institution building integral to their labor activism.

### Disrupting whiteness in labor reform discourse and movements

Rather than expand the boundaries of respectability and US citizenship, like Irish immigrant women, Victoria Earle Matthews, Anna Julia Cooper, and other clubwomen disrupted the very premise of whiteness foundational to the movement to end 'white slavery.' They inserted racial and gender equality goals into the labor reform agenda by employing what historian Brittany Cooper defines as 'embodied discourse, or 'a form of Black female textual activism wherein race women assertively demand the inclusion' of working-class Black female bodies.<sup>60</sup> Matthews and Cooper foregrounded the experiences of Black women migrants and domestics to deconstruct ideologies of whiteness that upheld white native born and immigrant women as the epitome of respectability worthy of protection from sexual and labor exploitation. They also challenged labor reform discourses that touted white men as the quintessential productive laborer and rights-bearing US citizen.

Pulling together strands of labor reform, racial and gender equality, and racial uplift discourses with Black women's lived experiences, Matthews and Cooper declared that Black household workers were productive laborers and native-born citizens who advanced the nation and the Black community. Matthews also made it her life's work to advocate for the protection of Black migrant women from sexual exploitation. Cooper and Matthews did not only reconstruct hegemonic discourses, but they willed their ideas and visions into existence through institution-building.<sup>61</sup> As far as these race-women were concerned, their schools and settlement homes offered laboring Black women resources that were due to them as respectable and productive US and global citizens.<sup>62</sup>

Matthews had a deeply personal and political commitment to remedying the labor struggles of southern migrant women. Acting upon her belief that Black migrant women were equal to white women, she co-founded the very first lodging home and traveler's aid service to provide resources to migrants that the state was unwilling to extend to them. As Matthews recalled, there were 'all sorts of institutions' for the 'young and unfriended [women] of other races' that guided them to safe housing and employment, but for Black girls and women, 'there is nothing.'<sup>63</sup> Matthews co-founded the White Rose Mission and Industrial Association in 1897, and she crafted the organization's

services to reflect her diasporic racial politics and belief that providing practical and educational resources for laboring Black women enhanced the social, cultural, and labor productivity of the entire Black community.<sup>64</sup>

Matthews also defied persistent slavery-era expectations that domestic workers devote their entire lives to serving white families. She offered resources that were critical for Black women taking care of themselves and their children while nourishing their own intellectual interests. While the White Rose Home, as it was called, primarily served southern migrant women, staff also opened its doors over the years to women who sought their services from Honolulu, Bermuda, Brazil, and a 'refined' African woman 'who could not be admitted to a hotel [in New York City] because of her dark skin.'<sup>65</sup> The Home offered employment assistance; lodging and food; daily kindergarten classes for the children of laboring Black families in the neighborhood; domestic arts courses; and an extensive library and advanced courses on African diasporic history and literature.<sup>66</sup>



Women of the White Rose Home, July 1909, Hubert Harrison Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Pamphlet from the White Rose Mission. Photograph shows two travelers going inside of the home with their suitcases. Courtesy of Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture by permission of Kenneth Ambrose, owner of the White Rose Mission and Industrial Association Collection, and grandson of a White Rose Mission president.

While managing the Home, Matthews reconstructed hegemonic discourses that justified labor and sexual exploitation when Black working-class women arrived in northern cities. In her most renowned speech, 'Dangers Encountered by Southern Girls in Northern Cities,' delivered at the Hampton Negro Conference in 1898, she challenged Black elitist views about the perceived shiftlessness and sexual immorality of working-class women. Matthews declared that employment agents traveling to rural Black communities throughout the South and offering false promises of gainful domestic service employment in northern cities were to blame for all southern Black girls 'commonly adjudged to be weak morally.'<sup>67</sup> As she explained, southern girls were often coerced into working in brothels or laboring as domestics without pay after traveling North with the agents. Matthews

filtered her detailed descriptions of migrants' experiences through the audience's collective knowledge of slavery to impress upon them the importance of helping their fellow southerners. Alluding to the sexual abuse of Black women during slave auctions and inhumane living conditions on plantations, she noted that white crowds gathered at the Southern Steamship Lines in New York City to choose from who they referred to as 'crops,' or Black women who they wanted to work for them. When unsuspecting women left with employment agents, they were treated as 'so many head of cattle.' They were 'hurdled into dirty ill-smelling apartments, many feeling lucky if a pallet given them' and forced into prostitution if they could not find work as domestics.<sup>68</sup>

Similar to her approach in 'The Awakening of the Afro American,' Matthews urged her audience to organize on behalf of Black women, but she had a different message for her Black audience. She challenged them to do their own research on employment agencies and convince women they knew not to work for the disreputable ones or migrate at all.<sup>69</sup> Matthews served as chairwoman of the Hampton Negro Conference Domestic Science Committee a year after her speech. While leading the committee, she encouraged her colleagues to establish public baths, health services, and gymnasiums for Black migrant women and their children so that they would have access to the same resources available to white women in northern cities.<sup>70</sup>

Writer and educator Anna Julia Cooper, who would earn a PhD from the Sorbonne in 1924, was also deeply committed to challenging the privileging of white women in labor reform discourse and movements. Although highly educated, she was not far removed from the history of slavery and the labor struggles of Black women. Cooper was born into slavery in Raleigh, North Carolina, and her mother labored as a domestic worker during and after slavery.<sup>71</sup> Unlike her clubwomen colleagues, she had to work her way through Oberlin College, and she encountered financial difficulties throughout her adult life.<sup>72</sup> As an outspoken and public critic of systemic discrimination and patriarchy, she encountered obstacles to publishing her scholarship and she was targeted by the Black male elite. She also struggled to raise several adopted children on a small teacher's salary while building schools to service working-class African Americans. As someone who was sensitive to the needs of everyday women, she committed the majority of her life to producing scholarship, speeches, and quantitative data to support the cause of improving the working and living conditions of domestic workers.

In the essay 'What Are We Worth?' Cooper declared, 'One often hears in the North an earnest plea of some lecturer for 'our working girls' (of course this means white working girls).'<sup>73</sup> She asserted that it was impossible for her 'to catch the fire of sympathy and enthusiasm' of northern labor movements because they had not thought about 'colored women bending over wash-tubs and ironing boards' who could barely afford to clothe and feed themselves and their children.'<sup>74</sup> Cooper also criticized white immigrant union members who complained of 'wrong and oppression' and 'would boycott an employer if he hired a colored workman' for paralyzing 'the progress of an industry that gives work to an American-born citizen.'<sup>75</sup> Cooper's analysis made clear that a strike against laboring African Americans, which included domestic workers, threatened progress and democracy for white immigrants and the national economy. Later in her career, she advocated for working-class Black women as president of Frelinghuysen University and founder of the Hannah Stanley Opportunity School. At these institution for working-class Blacks in Washington, DC, she employed her transgressive racial philosophy that laboring Black women were

entitled to an 'all 'round education' as US citizens. As biographer Vivian May explained, Cooper believed that 'systemic oppression due to race, gender, poverty, adult status, or disability should not be exacerbated by lack of access to an excellent education.'<sup>76</sup>

Two decades after Cooper published 'What Are We Worth?', Elizabeth Ross Haynes, a social worker for the US Department of Labor, along with Nannie Helen Burroughs, Mary Church Terrell, and several other clubwomen, challenged white women labor organizers to put into practice their nineteenth century-old claim that they represented all 'working girls.' In 1919, they urged the International Congress of Working Women to admit them as representatives of working Black women, most of who labored in domestic service and agriculture.<sup>77</sup> While members of the congress publicly acknowledged the co-authored letter, they ultimately decided through their inaction not to expand their agenda to include Black women.<sup>78</sup>

The following year, educator Nannie Helen Burroughs, who briefly worked as a janitor before establishing her own school, co-founded the National Association of Wage Earners (NAWE) with Mary McLeod Bethune, another founder of an occupational school for Black women.<sup>79</sup> They sought to improve the working conditions of Black domestics. Burroughs' ambitious project reflected her philosophy that domestics were critical to the political advancement of the Black community. The association's members, primarily southern migrants in D.C., declared that they helped form the NAWE because 'our women have no organization standing with them' and they could 'become a tower of strength in the labor world' through their own labor organizing and domestic science training.<sup>80</sup> Although the organization dissolved in 1926, it was successful at organizing forums to educate the public about exploitation in domestic service; establishing domestic science courses and practice rooms; and maintaining an employer checklist and list of demands and grievances to help them strategize on how to influence legislation and organize for better wages.<sup>81</sup>

## Conclusion

It took less time for Irish immigrant women to succeed in expanding the boundaries of whiteness than it took for African American women to dismantle the underpinnings of it. By the mid-1920s, Irish women could avoid domestic work all together upon their arrival in the United States.<sup>82</sup> Black household workers established their own organizations to assert their demands for labor reform in the 1920s and continued to push for change well into the 1970s. Achieving labor rights for Black women remained a communal project considered critical for achieving racial and gender equality. Domestic workers established their own organizations and worked with Black clubwomen, journalists, leftist activists, and clergymen in their movement for labor rights from the 1920s to the 1970s.

They continued evoking the history of slavery to sharpen the argument that domestic workers needed legal protection from state and federal governments. As Premilla Nadasen has explained, 'For them [African Americans], slavery was a trope that connected past and present, illuminated power relations, and spoke to kin, community, and a legacy of racism.'<sup>83</sup> According to domestic workers and their allies, Black women were independent and highly skilled workers whose labors were equally important to (if not more important than) all other forms of work deemed worthy of protection under labor laws. Their

collectively produced discourse of labor rights, rooted in the history of slavery, was critical for labor and political organizing throughout and past the twentieth century.

Bringing together Irish immigrant and African American women's histories through an intersectional framework prompts us to detail how race has historically and continues to impact labor organizing and the materiality of women's everyday working lives, even when the word 'race' is not explicitly mentioned. Similar to the political context in which Irish immigrant and southern Black women migrated to US northeastern cities, African American women and immigrant women of color are overrepresented in low-wage occupations, and their struggle to become recognized as fully citizen continues to this very day. Immigrants' pathway to citizenship remains intricately tied to the work that they do, and how they are racialized and racialize themselves in relation to whiteness and African Americans. White working-class men are still touted as the quintessential US worker and voter whose concerns should determine key political decisions about voting rights, labor, and the economy.

US born and immigrant women of color in household employment today have continued the legacy of evoking slavery to make their voices heard in a persistently white male supremacist country that devalues domestic work and draws racial boundaries around citizenship. Similar to nineteenth century Irish women, they find slavery the most powerful historical reference to name and publicly denounce the injustices that they face daily in private homes.<sup>84</sup> The important distinction is that when Black women and other women of color pull from this history it is not an appropriation. Like the African American women who preceded them, it is their past, and thereby a powerful utterance for transformative resistance.<sup>85</sup>

## Notes

1. Victoria Earle Matthews, *The awakening of the Afro-American woman: an address delivered at the annual convention of the Society of Christian Endeavor, July 11th, 1897* (Brooklyn, NY: 33 Poplar Street, 1897), 4, 9.
2. Irish Servant Girl, Flatbush Servant Works Hard, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 1907.
3. See Edward Baptiste's discussion of the enduring impact of slavery from Reconstruction to the twentieth century on governing socioeconomic and political institutions, and on historical research itself, Edward Baptiste, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), xviii–xxv. Also see W.E.B. DuBois's discussion of the impact of slavery on ideologies of race, class, and the labor sector during and after Reconstruction, W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860–1880* (New York: The Free Press, 1998 [1935]).
4. Description of the conference is based on local reporting, see (1897) Preparing for the Christian Endeavor Convention, *The San Francisco Call*.
5. Victoria Earle Matthews, *The Awakening of the Afro American Woman*, 4.
6. Irish Servant Girl, Flatbush Servant Works Hard, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 1907.
7. Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois are often touted as the most prominent theorists on race, migration, and labor. Irish immigrants' racial history is filtered through the perspectives and experiences of working-class Irish immigrant men. See David Roediger's, *Wages of Whiteness: Race and Making of the American Working-Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); Noel Ignatiev's, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
8. Some of these studies include Premilla Nadasen, *Household Workers Unite: The Untold Story African American Women Who Built A Movement*, 2015; Vanessa May, *Unprotected Labor: Household Workers, Politics, and Middle-Class Reform in New York, 1870–1940* (Chapel Hill:

- The University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Mary-Elizabeth B. Murphy, *Jim Crow Capital: Women and Black Freedom Struggles in Washington D.C., 1920–1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018).
9. I am borrowing the term “working ladyhood” from Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 51.
  10. Women and Blacks were initially excluded from US citizenship. See Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).
  11. Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983).
  12. Quoted from Judith Rollins, *Between Women: Domesticity and Their Employers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985), 52.
  13. Several physicians experimented on Irish immigrant and enslaved Black women’s bodies. For this comparative history, see Deirdre Cooper-Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017).
  14. Upon arrival in the United States in the mid nineteenth century, the Irish worked in the same occupations and lived in the same neighborhood as African Americans. In popular literature, the Irish were commonly referred to as “niggers turned inside out,” see Noel Ignatiev (1995) *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge), 40–42.
  15. See Andrew T. Urban’s history of how the domestic service economy was built on the exploitation and migrations of Irish, Black, and Chinese domestic servants, Andrew T. Urban, *Brokering Servitude: Migration and the Politics of Domestic Labor during the Long Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2018). For a labor history of Caribbean migrant women in the early twentieth century, see Irma Watkins Owens, ‘Early-Twentieth-Century Caribbean Women: Migration and Social Networks in New York City’, in *Islands in the City: West Indian Migration to New York*, ed. Nancy Foner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
  16. Kerby Miller, *Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 346; Janet Nolan, *Ourselves Alone: Women’s Emigration from Ireland, 1885–1920* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989), 2–3.
  17. Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 164–165.
  18. Margaret Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840–1930* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 42.
  19. Irish immigration to the US declined by the 1930s due to immigration restriction acts. Great Britain became Irish women’s first-choice destination due to increased household employment opportunities there and a decline in negative feelings toward the former imperial power after the formation of the Irish Free State, see Margaret Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget*, 2014. David Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White* (New York: Persus Books, 2005); Bronwen Walter, *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place and Irish women* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).
  20. Brenda Faye Clegg, ‘Black Female Domesticity During the Great Depression in New York City, 1930–1940’ (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1983), 18–19.
  21. Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985).
  22. Joseph A. Hill, The Recent Northward Migration of the Negro, *Opportunity Magazine*, 1924.
  23. Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 1985, 155–156.
  24. Judith Rollins, *Between Women*, 1985, 54; Brenda Faye Clegg, *Black Female Domesticity*, 1983.
  25. Few Black women were hired for factory jobs partly because white women refused to work with them. See Mary White Ovington, *Half a Man: The Status of the Negro in New York* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1911). For discussion of preference for white women in shops, see Lara Vapnek, *Breadwinners: Working Women and Economic Independence, 1865–1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

26. For comparative analyses of satirical representations of Irish and Black servants, see Danielle Phillips, 'Moving with the Women: Tracing Racialization, Migration, and Domestic Workers in the Archive', *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society*, 38 (2013) (2): 379–404; April Schultz, 'The Black Mammy and the Irish Bridget: Domestic Service and the Representation of Race, 1830–1930', *Éire-Ireland Journal*, 48 (Fall/Winter 2013) (3&4): 176–212; Andrew T. Urban, 'Irish Domestic Servants, 'Biddy' and Rebellion in the American Home, 1850–1900', *Gender and History* 21 (August 2009): 263–286.
27. Lara Vapnek, *Breadwinners*, 2009, 23–24, 64.
28. See Eileen Boris's discussion of the racist, class-based, and gendered deployments of "white slavery," see Eileen Boris, *Home to Work: Motherhood and the Politics of Industrial Home-work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
29. Quoted from Vapnek, *Breadwinners*, 2009, 79 and 140.
30. Irish laundresses and cooks formed an assembly in the Knights of Labor. See Susan Levine, 'Labor's True Woman: Domesticity and Equal Rights in the Knights of Labor', *The Journal of American History* (1983).
31. See Eileen Boris's analysis of masculinity, government regulation, and labor in the home, Eileen Boris, *Home to Work*, 1994. Also see Vanessa May's discussion of the debates over domestic service and the privacy of middle-class homes, Vanessa May, *Unprotected Labor: Household Workers, Politics, and Middle-Class Reform in New York, 1870–1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).
32. The history of Irish domestics' tradition of letter writing as labor resistance in Ireland and Great Britain has been well documented. See Laura Schwartz, "'What we think we need is a union of domestics such as the minors have': The Domestic Workers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland, 1908–14", *Twentieth Century British History* 25 (2014) (2): 173–198. There appears to have also been a similar tradition among Irish domestics in the US. Irish women who immigrated to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were literate; sponsors of labor movements on both sides of the Atlantic. They wrote letters to family members about the hardships of domestic service and Irish servant letters had appeared in newspapers since the 1870s. See Janet Nolan, *Ourselves Alone: Women's Emigration from Ireland, 1885–1920* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989); Susan Levine, 'Labor's True Woman: Domesticity and Equal Rights in the Knights of Labor', *The Journal of American History* 70 (1983): 323–339; Kerby Miller and Patricia Mulholland Miller, *Journey of Hope: The Story of Irish Immigration to America* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001). Irish servant authors would not have been unlike Black laundresses of their time who wrote letters and petitions to demand labor rights. See Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).
33. Some Irish servants also refused to work alongside Black women. See Faye Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1983).
34. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race, *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 17 (Winter 1992) (2): 252.
35. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race, Winter 1992, 253.
36. For a history of the construction of respectability and its significance to US culture, see Richard Lyman Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, and Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011).
37. For a fuller discussion about the racial connotations of dirt and domestic workers, see Phyllis Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920–1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).
38. J.S.G. (1897) Servant Girl Evil: 'Mul's' Sentiments on This Grave Subject Endorsed, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (6 March).
39. Irish Rambler, 'Suggests a Servant Girl Trust', *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (11 March), 1897.

40. H.M.E., 'Would Keep Such Cranks Out of the Kitchen', *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (10 March), (1897).
41. Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 34; Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America*, 1983.
42. An Irish Servant Girl, Assertion That Irish Girls Will Not Stand Tyranny, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (9 March), 1897.
43. D.M.B., Untitled, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (8 March), 1897.
44. Plucky Irish Girl, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (9 March), 1897.
45. An Irish Servant Girl, Irish Servants in Our Country's History, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (12 March), 1897.
46. An Irish Servant Girl, Who Has Seen Better Days (1897) Could Write a Book of Her Experiences, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (9 March).
47. (1880). Mistress and Maid, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (April).
48. (1899). "A look ahead;—but not so very far ahead, either!" *Puck Magazine* (8 February).
49. For discussion about limited support for domestic workers in white labor organizations, see Lara Vapnek (2009) *Breadwinners*.
50. Vanessa May, *Unprotected Labor*, 2011.
51. Ibid.
52. For data on the harassment and murder of Black women and men in northern states after emancipation, see W.E.B. DuBois, *Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996 [1899]); Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *On Lynchings* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2014).
53. For a discussion of Black domestic workers' acts of resistance in northeastern cities, see Elizabeth Clark Lewis, *Living In, Living Out: African American Domesticity in Washington D.C., 1910–1940* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1994); Leslie Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626–1863* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).
54. For the case of Livinia Pickney, see Pickney vs. Halligan, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (12 December), 1877. Interestingly, her employers had an Irish surname.
55. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Daughters of Sorrow: Attitudes toward Black Women, 1880–1920* (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1990), 19.
56. For histories of Black women in New York City and Philadelphia who refused to work as domestics for the duration of their lives, see Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019).
57. I also think that it is important to foreground this edited volume to highlight the groundbreaking knowledge production that emanates from Black women's spaces, in this case, Spelman College. See Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995).
58. I am borrowing Brittany C. Cooper's definition of "race women" as Black women who "declared themselves public thinkers on race questions". See Brittany C. Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 11.
59. See Sarah Haley's discussion of Black clubwomen's prison reform activism. Sarah Haley (2016) *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press).
60. Brittany Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 2017, 3.
61. I use the word "willed" to describe their determination to build and sustain institutions with very limited financial resources and public support.
62. I am referring here to the White Rose Mission Home, National Trade School for Women and Girls, and other institutions started by Black women to meet the educational and everyday practical needs of laboring and migrant Black women. These institutions offered occupational and liberal arts courses, daycare services for children, traveler's aid, safe housing,

- and employment assistance. For a history of clubwomen's institutions and organizations, see Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894–1994* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999).
63. (1897) *New York Evening Telegram* (20 September). For discussion of protective resources for Irish immigrant women, see Andrew T. Urban, *Brokering Servitude*, 2017.
  64. Steve Kramer, 'Uplifting Our 'Downtrodden Sisterhood': Victoria Earle Matthews and New York City's White Rose Mission, 1897–1907', *The Journal of African American History* 91, no. 3 (2006): 243–266; Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load*, 1999.
  65. Frances R. Keyser (Summer 1906) Report of the White Rose Home for the Summer of 1906; Mary Kendal (date unknown) White Rose Home: Its Work and Need, Archives, Harlem, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library (Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books).
  66. Date unknown. White Rose Mission Settlement: Girls from Southern Ports Protected, Social Life for Servants, Mothers' Sewing Clubs Help Support Work, Race History Classes, and a Unique Library, *New York Evening Post*, Harlem, New York, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library (Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division).
  67. William Patrick Burrell and D.E. Johnson, *Twenty-Five Years History of the Grand Fountain of the United Order of True Reformers* (Richmond, VA: Grand Fountain, United Order of True Reformers, 1909), 502; Victoria Earle Matthews, 'Dangers Encountered by Southern Girls in Northern Cities', in *Hampton Negro Conference Proceedings, Number II* (Hampton, Virginia: Hampton Institute, July 1898), 63.
  68. Victoria Earle Matthews, *Dangers Encountered*, 1898, 65.
  69. Victoria Earle Matthews, *Dangers Encountered*, 1898, 64.
  70. Victoria Earle Matthews, 'Suggestions of the Committee on Domestic Science', in *Annual Hampton Negro Conference Proceedings* (Hampton, Virginia: Hampton Institute, 1899), 36.
  71. Cooper credited her mother and other older enslaved women for shaping her racial and gender consciousness. See Vivian May, *Anna Julia Cooper: Visionary Black Feminist* (New York: Routledge, 2007).
  72. Ibid.
  73. Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice From the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988 [1892]), 254. Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan speculate that Cooper wrote the essay for Black readers. See Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper: Including A Voice from the South and other important essays, papers, and letters* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 47.
  74. Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 1988 [1892], 254–256.
  75. Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 1988 [1892], 255–256.
  76. Vivian May, *Anna Julia Cooper*, 63.
  77. Lara Vapnek, 'The 1919 International Congress of Working Women: Transnational Debates on the 'Woman Worker'', *Journal of Women's History* 25, no. 4 (2013): 165–166.
  78. "Stenographic Report of the ICWW, Afternoon Session, November 4, 1919," 35–37, International Federation of Working Women Records, Folder 3, Schlesinger Library, Cambridge, Mass.
  79. Opal V. Easter, *Nannie Helen Burroughs* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995).
  80. 'Colored Women to Organize Domestic Workers: National Association of Wage Earners in Big Drive for Ten Thousand Members', *The Pittsburgh Courier* (22 March) (1924): 2.
  81. Opal V. Easter, *Nannie Helen Burroughs* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995).
  82. Upward class mobility for Irish immigrant women, however, was not commensurate with other white women. See Stephen Steinberg, *Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).
  83. Premilla Nadasen, *Household Workers Unite: The Untold Story of African American Women Who Built A Movement* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 3.
  84. The Domestic Workers Alliance, for example, produces research reports that reference slavery and human trafficking to describe the experiences of domestic workers. See National

Domestic Workers Alliance, *The Human Trafficking of Domestic Workers in the United States* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 2017).

85. I am referring here to women such as African American and immigrant Black, South American, Latin American, and Filipina domestic workers.

## Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge Eileen Boris and the anonymous reviewer for their very insightful comments.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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