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Ain't I a Worker?!: Gendered Labor and the Worker as Political Subject in Workers' Center Organizing

Laura Y. Liu

Abstract: The idea of labor precarity is now prominent in so-called postindustrial contexts, as nonstandard work has come to dominate more industries and cover a wide range of jobs. But precarious work is hardly new; vulnerable work has been and remains a common condition, especially for women, migrants, and people of color. These precarious workers are the target of grassroots labor organizers, such as workers' centers, which are important sites for understanding notions of work and family. Through an examination of workers' center organizing in the early 2000s in New York City, this paper shows how community organizers, including women workers in Chinatown, rethought the interplay between productive paid work and reproductive care work. This led to the reevaluation of the category of family in relation to work and to organizing. These developments led organizers to broaden the concept of work, and to reconfigure the worker as a political subject always embedded in overlapping social fields. **Keywords:** precarity, community organizing, workers' centers, Chinatown, reproductive labor

Introduction

Recent attention to changes in work suggests that labor precarity is everywhere, as new economic relationships have expanded the conditions of nonstandard work across a variety of industries. Precarity is now increasingly affecting workers traditionally protected by the labor-management accord of the postwar years, resulting in the expansion of what Standing (2015) has called the "precariat." In the United States, with the shifts that started in the early 1970s—deindustrialization, deskilling, capital mobility, loss of manufacturing jobs, rise of service work, and employ-

ers' assault on organized labor—unions and other labor organizations have had to contend with the increasing challenge of how to organize workers in nonstandard work arrangements. Freelancers, contract workers, mobile workers, people who work outside traditional work hours and workplaces—these and others comprise the growing precariat.

In this new order, Standing posits that one segment is “the potentially transformative part of the precariat, the new vanguard” (2015, 8). This set of workers is structurally positioned without traditional labor protections, but is educated and armed with the benefits of cultural capital and social class, and therefore best poised to become “a class-for-itself” (2015, 12). Standing distinguishes this vanguard group from a second segment of the precariat:

migrants and minorities, who have a strong sense of relative deprivation by virtue of having no *present*, no home. They might be called the *nostalgics*. Politically, they tend to be relatively passive or disengaged, except for occasional days of rage when something that appears to be a direct threat to them sparks collective anger. (2015, 8; emphasis in original)

Standing's characterization of this group of workers is troubling on many levels, not least because the reduction of their political stance to one of passivity and disengagement, or rage and anger, invokes racialized tropes. He erases migrants and people of color as political actors by dismissing the entirety of their collective action and organized social protest. Instead, Standing privileges a normative, unmarked, universal subject at the center of his analysis of the precariat, one who, judging from his typology, must be white, genderless (male), educated, and a citizen, even if downwardly mobile.

But is the precariat really a new political category of worker-subjects? To what extent is precarity framed as a novel formulation for understanding work and class politics simply because the category now includes a larger proportion of mainstream workers historically positioned to expect a measure of job security? After all, precarious work itself is not new, and there have long been vulnerable workers performing it, though they have been much more likely to be women, migrants, and people of color.¹ In the post-Fordist era, grassroots labor organizations and community organizers have been targeting these precarious workers all along and thinking much about the conditions of nonstandard work. It is worth analyzing this domain of worker organizing for what it can illuminate about our concep-

tions of work, and certainly about new domains of precarity. The organizing of immigrant women workers through the workers' center model demonstrates a compelling case against the privileging of an educated and elite vanguard precariat class to lead the way forward.

This paper examines workers' center campaigns led primarily by women workers in New York City's Chinatown to show how the process and practice of organizing low-wage precarious workers and their communities offers a conceptual broadening of who workers are and what counts as work. In the early 2000s, I conducted ethnographic research on two community-based workers' centers in New York City organizing around what they called "sweatshop conditions," but what we might today also call conditions of precarity. They were Chinese Staff and Workers' Association (CSWA) and National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (NMASS). The organizing efforts discussed in this paper focused on the working conditions for women in the garment industry, which led to further examination of the role of women in the home and community, and of the relationship between family and work. This study traces how the strategies and approaches for organizing vulnerable women workers led to a reconfiguration of the worker as a political subject intertwined with other roles.

This shift happened through two crucial developments led by women organizers: First, women's roles in families around reproductive labor and care work required them to rethink the interplay between paid and unpaid work, and, second, this led to a broader reconsideration of the category of family in relation to work and to organizing. The resulting expansion of the category of the worker enabled the construction of the precarious worker as a much more relational and interconnected political subject than was traditionally defined. This precarious worker is determined by her roles in family and community, even as the fraught dynamics around gendered labor often reintroduce embedded hierarchies into work and organizing. The particular context of workers' centers was an important condition for this transformation.

Workers' Center Organizing

Over the past twenty years, workers' centers have attracted significant interest as sites of community-based labor organizing, including nontraditional workplaces and workers (Milkman and Ott 2014; Fine 2006; Jayaraman and Ness 2005; Theodore and Martin 2009; Kwong 2001; Kwong

1996). While workers' centers are by definition aimed at bringing together particular groups of workers, they differ from unions in structure and strategy, targeting low-wage workers traditionally marginalized by mainstream labor unions, including both documented and undocumented immigrants, youth and students, injured workers, unpaid workers, mothers, caregivers, and those who work in the home, both paid and unpaid. Workers' centers are often simultaneously community- and workplace-based, and they vary in whether they define community by neighborhood, ethnic or immigrant group, industry, or some combination thereof. They do not necessarily limit themselves to a single trade, and they often combine delivery of services with workers' rights activities. By being rooted in communities and neighborhoods, workers' centers aim to redefine the relationship between worker organizing and community organizing.

Founded in 1979 in New York City's Chinatown, Chinese Staff and Workers' Association is by many accounts the first workers' center in the United States. The organization started as a mutual aid association in response to what they describe as mainstream labor unions' neglect of immigrant restaurant workers in Chinatown. Over the years, their work expanded outward from the restaurant industry to include the garment, construction, and home healthcare industries, among others. As they began to look at issues that were common across the Chinatown community, they developed the idea that workers' center organizing should take a cross-trade approach. They have a membership base model focused on worker involvement, the foundation of most workers' centers today, and one that differs from traditional unions' emphasis on collective bargaining agreements and what some describe as unions' managerialist approach. Currently, CSWA has over 1,300 members, though membership is neither tightly controlled nor even closely monitored, and is seen more as a method of bringing people into the organization's base. Member participation ranges from seeking services, to attending social events, to becoming actively involved in a case, committee, or campaign; it is this latter group that the organization considers organizers.

Originally started as a project of CSWA, National Mobilization Against Sweatshops was founded by youth members of the organization to encompass a more multiethnic and multiracial range of workers beyond Chinatown, and to envision connections across the United States that might plant the seeds of a national movement. In 1996, the group spun out of CSWA to form its own independent workers' center, though they

remain sister organizations and work together closely on many campaigns and issues. Their offices now occupy side-by-side storefronts in a building in Manhattan's Chinatown. Both are the subjects of my study, though at times the emphasis shifts.

This piece is based on fieldwork research I conducted with CSWA and NMASS from March 2001 to June 2002.² My research consisted primarily of participant observation, during which I accompanied members while tabling and handing out fliers, attended pickets and protests, and sat in on countless organizing meetings. I went to court dates, community meetings, and press events, and I observed how CSWA and NMASS worked with lawyers, foundations, city agencies, politicians, and other community groups. This paper primarily draws on the "Ain't I A Woman?!" campaign (AIW), which had its roots in women garment workers' labor violation cases going back to 1991.³ CSWA and NMASS organizers launched the AIW in 1999 with a high-profile case that brought together women workers from several subcontractors making clothing for the DKNY label. In 2006, AIW expanded to include a group of home healthcare attendants who had been denied overtime pay. While AIW focused on the exploitative conditions of women's paid work, it would go on to grapple with women workers' unpaid care work as well, and is a campaign that is still ongoing.

Women's Work and Precarity

Early in my research with CSWA, as I sought to understand the organization's structure and political strategy, I frequently heard organizers refer to the importance of having women in leadership roles in the organization.⁴ This, they told me, was instrumental in shaping the organization's political vision. I had learned from one of the original founders of CSWA, Mr. E, that the originators were all men who had worked in the male-dominated parts of the restaurant industry in Chinatown.⁵ As they expanded their vision, they reached out to Chinese workers in the construction industry where workers are almost entirely men.⁶ It was only when the organization began to draw members from the garment industry, where women workers predominate, that the demographics of their membership began to change.

But membership is not leadership, and I wanted to know how women came to be strong organizers in CSWA. Women's leadership was visible in

the structures of the organization, such as the staff and Board of Directors, the Women's Committee (also called the Women's Project), and the Garment Workers Committee. Women also organized others in their workplaces and exercised leadership on an informal level among their social networks. When I asked Mr. E how this came to be, he said, "Women are the hardest hit by the so-called growing economy. That's why the leadership is women now." He explained that there was a relationship between these women workers' precarious position in the labor market and their capacity and value as organizers. In other words, the context for their work—in this case the garment industry, and women's position at the bottom of its subcontracting pyramid—was crucial in shaping the workers' center approach.

The garment industry in New York City, as elsewhere, is highly segmented and highly gendered. Though their numbers have been declining since the early 1970s, garment factories remain throughout the city, clustered in Midtown Manhattan's Garment District and Brooklyn's Sunset Park, as well as in other industrial areas and immigrant neighborhoods. Asian and Latina women are highly concentrated in garment production. Men also work in the factories but in smaller numbers and in different jobs, which are often constructed as heavier work, higher skill, and more specialized. Partly because of this gendered division of labor, the garment industry has been the context for many of the cases that have shaped AIW.

Since the early 1990s, CSWA has been organizing against particular garment factory owners around unpaid wages and labor violations. Organizers explained to me that working on these individual cases helped lay the groundwork for AIW, and the eventual expansion of its object of organizing from working conditions in one factory to reevaluating women's work in a much broader sense. This shift included demands for recognition and compensation of care work, and a deeper understanding of the interrelated spheres of waged work and family. I would learn that the transformation emerged from discussion among organizers of the multiple roles women members had in their communities, where they shouldered responsibilities as garment workers, but also as caregivers to children, spouses, injured family members, and others. The focus on family and care work came about partly because of what happened to one garment factory worker who was a leader in CSWA.

One Mother's Influential Story

Mrs. L was a garment worker who immigrated to the United States in 1987 from Guangzhou, China. By the early 1990s, she was working as a supervisor in a Midtown Manhattan garment factory. One day in 1992, without warning, she arrived at work to find that the boss had closed the shop. At the time of closure, the owner of the garment factory owed Mrs. L and thirteen other garment workers a total of \$40,000 in unpaid back wages. Almost immediately, he opened up a new factory under a new name, just a few blocks away, but claimed it was an unrelated corporate entity to avoid paying the original workers their back wages. Mrs. L and the other workers were familiar with this version of microscale capital flight as a common tactic of sweatshop owners to evade accountability. With CSWA, they organized collectively and eventually won a portion of their back wages in what was seen and celebrated as a substantial victory. Subsequent events, however, would temper the victory and reshape the organizers' concept of what they were fighting for.

After the factory had closed and she had moved on to a new job, Mrs. L was devastated to discover that the eldest of her three sons had dropped out of high school six months to a year prior. Like many immigrant children with working parents, her son was the first to the mailbox each day and was therefore keeping the school's mail from his parents. Mrs. L was unaware of his withdrawal from school or his daily activities because she had been working extremely long hours every day at her new job. Speaking about the experience, she described the heavy toll of working long hours well beyond her son's truancy:

Not only am I not able to take care of my family [elders], I'm also not able to take care of my children. Every night when I get home, my kids are already sleeping, so what I have to do is to wake them up and feed them before they can go back to sleep. With things like this they are not being taken care of, they don't eat well, and no one is taking care of their homework. As parents we have not been doing our work; we have not been responsible for being parents. I don't get home until very late and I still have to cook, clean up, and wash clothes. I don't get to bed until 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. every single morning. And then the next day I have to get up very early, prepare breakfast for my children, take them to school, and go to work another thirteen-hour day. (CSWA, Unpublished internal document, n.d.)

Mrs. L, like other garment workers, had been forced to work mandatory overtime, under threat of being fired. Now she feared that her son would fall in with one of Chinatown's gangs. Suddenly, she saw how the insecurity of her job translated into consistently long work hours, which in turn intensified the precarity within her family. Notably, when Mrs. L found out her son had dropped out of school, she said that she felt being a worker *and an organizer* had conflicted with and undermined her role as a mother. Perhaps it was because she named *organizing*, along with paid work, as the activities that took time from her parenting, that the incident triggered deep self-reflection throughout the organization.

Mrs. L's story rippled through CSWA's Women's Committee and the Garment Workers' Committee, reverberating with other women leaders who bore the responsibility of caring for children, elders, and extended family. They understood her anguish. Over and over, I heard organizers recall that period and describe its impact. The memory often provoked tears. For so many of them, long hours had meant missed time with family, worries over neglect, and feelings of guilt and inadequacy, especially as parents. In the ensuing conversations, organizers bitterly described the way garment factory bosses "owned" their time, and could demand more work with no notice. They relayed accounts of working early morning to late night, of expecting a shift to end, only to be told that more orders needed filling. The sense that they had no control over their time, that forced overtime was a condition of keeping a job, was part of what sometimes made them feel they were working "like slaves."

Their narratives were emblematic of the challenges of organizing low-income, immigrant women workers, many of whom straddle the formal and informal labor markets, and otherwise occupy positions of economic precarity and social insecurity. Much of the impact of Mrs. L's crisis lay in its recognition of heteropatriarchal family structures where women bear responsibility for reproductive labor. In the aftermath, CSWA's political direction began to shift, coalescing around the issues of time and family life. Taking up women's multiple roles as wage workers and in families catalyzed this development by generating a reevaluation of reproductive labor and a reframing of the worker as necessarily embedded in social and family life.

The Gendered Worker-Subject

The focus on reproductive labor sparked vigorous debates over whether

and, if so, how women's unpaid domestic care work differed from their paid work. These conversations often challenged or redefined assumptions about gendered labor. Other times, they reinforced traditional notions of women's fundamental role as caregivers with primary obligations to family and children. Mrs. M, for instance, an active garment worker organizer with two small children, argued that naming women's unpaid domestic duties and caregiving as "work" was an important form of recognition. Mrs. L, speaking for CSWA at a national conference on immigrant women and labor organizers in 2001, elaborated on this view:

I feel that as women we have to come out and we have to stand up. We actually have a dual burden. One is we have to go out and make a living, wages. The second thing is that after we go home, we have to take care of our home, we have to take care of our kids, we have to take care of our family. Our work is very, very difficult and hard, and no matter how hard it is, society has not recognized the value of our work. . . . Work at home has never been compensated; it is never something that people will say, that [they] will pay you separately for the work you do at home. Can you tell me, isn't it the responsibility of society? We have to value the work of women at home, raising the next generation and taking care of our family. Why not value our work at home? Why not understand that our work at home is also work?

A woman *is* a worker, she says here, both in the home and out, an idea that became increasingly rooted in CSWA and then NMASS and "Ain't I a Woman?!"

Some organizers, both women and men, disagreed, rejecting the idea that caregiving is "work" because they saw it as "natural" for women to do. Still others supported the recognition of care as work, but balked at the idea that it should be compensated. In one campaign meeting, organizers debated whether to work with a feminist policy group to push for a caregiver's tax credit that would compensate caregivers for their work. Mrs. S, a garment worker, active organizer, and mother of five, strongly objected, saying that "paying mothers to mother would really 'cheapen' the relationship."

Even the demand for recognition of women's work in the home could leave the identity of heteronormative motherhood intact and the gendering of caregiving unchallenged. Mrs. L's strong statement promoting compensation for women's work, for example, does not upend the idea that

reproductive work should be done by women, be they mothers, grandmothers, sisters, wives, or daughters. On the other hand, some women organizers complained about the time they had to spend caring for their families. Men should be asked to do more organizing work, they argued, because women have more caregiving work to do at home, often for grandchildren as well as children. This logic was at odds with what others said about the importance of having women organize precisely because they understood precarity in terms of both work and family.

Regardless of the range of positions, CSWA's debates around reproductive labor assumed the worker to be an always and already gendered subject (Fortunati 1995; Glenn 1992).⁷ This role was sometimes explored through the labor of organizing itself, echoing accounts of women's labor in social movements (Gilmore 1999; Davis 1983). By focusing on women workers' multiple forms of labor, organizers positioned the *woman worker* as the normative political subject. They affirmed her dual location in the "social factory"—where the family and the waged system are inseparable—a concept from the "Wages for Housework" campaign of the 1970s (Dalla Costa and James 1973; Weeks 2011, 120). The assumption of an interplay of roles for workers as political subjects could then be applied to all precarious workers, which broadened the organizing goals beyond traditional workplace concerns to include family, community, and social life, as well as reflecting back on the waged economy.

Time and Family Life

The conflict between time for work and time for family life proved to be significant beyond just women's roles within the family. Organizers found that the dilemma opened discussion of men's relationships to family, children's relationship to parents, and working people's time for community, friendship, and leisure. Early on, Mr. E had told me that shining a spotlight on issues for women workers broadened the overall scope of CSWA's organizing. He said, "Incorporating women's issues should not narrow the issues we're fighting for. It shouldn't mean these issues are *only* for women."

When I attended an organizing retreat for NMASS in 2001, at which CSWA was also present, I saw that time with family had become a crucial topic of discussion for both organizations. Josef was a Polish male construction worker who had suffered workplace injuries and was an active organizer at NMASS in the campaign to overhaul Workers' Compensa-

tion.⁸ At the retreat, he talked about his longing to have time with his children and family in terms of his childhood in Poland and his father:

My father worked in a coal mine. He wanted to build his own house, to take his kids to the park for a picnic. It was easier after World War II to have a better life [in Poland] than now. People worked eight hours, enough to save some. It should be like that. We shouldn't be forced to work eighteen to twenty hours [a day], or not knowing when you get off work. With eight hours you have time for your family. You make enough money to take care of your kids and have your dignity.

Josef's description of his father's aspirations about work in post-World War II Poland were linked directly to his hopes for his family. As a male organizer, Josef's embrace of the principle that conditions of work should also consider time not at work meant the analysis of reproductive labor had moved beyond being a "women's issue," even if Josef's father did not necessarily confront a double day.

At the same retreat, I witnessed youth organizers who talked about the impact of watching their parents work long hours and of working long hours themselves. Pilar, a teenager, and her mother, Lourdes, were both active Latina organizers at NMASS for many years, one of several mother-daughter pairs or other family groups I met. In discussing the relationship between family and work, Pilar attributed her involvement in NMASS to watching Lourdes work such long shifts and to missing out on time together. She said, in front of her mother, "I got involved because of my mom. I saw it as a family thing. My mom has always worked long hours and weekends. I have spent most of my life with babysitters." It was an emotionally charged moment. Lourdes was clearly pained to hear Pilar say this. Yet, Lourdes's involvement in NMASS created a different kind of space for maternal care. When Pilar got involved, organizing became a sphere of shared time and of being together in ways that paralleled work situations where children work alongside parents, as in piece-rate garment work done at home by families.

Family, Work, and Home as Worksite

At CSWA and NMASS, intergenerational conversation among elder, adult, and youth organizers often identified how spheres of family and work overlapped. Many of the younger women organizers had been or still

were workers (often underage) in multiple spaces as children. They had grown up working alongside their mothers in garment factories or watching sisters and other family members sewing, and had experienced how factory owners exploit family relationships at work. One young woman I met, Hui, illustrated how children and youth are often invisible accomplices to their parents' labor. As a teenager, Hui left high school to work with her mother and other family members in a garment factory. In September 1998, the foreman of the factory had an argument with her mother and punched her in the chest and stomach. Hui's mother fell and hit her head. Instead of punishing the foreman, the factory boss illegally fired Hui's entire family. When Hui tried to collect the overtime and back wages she was owed, the boss claimed she never worked there as his employee, but was only there to "help her mother." By using their family relationship to further exploit Hui, the boss enlisted her role as a daughter to obscure her role as a worker. For Hui and countless other children and teenagers who work in garment factories with their parents, family relationships intersect with work relationships in ways that render them unseen.

In a related scenario common in the garment industry, when workers take piecework home and engage their family members in sewing, family and work roles come together to blur the worksite and the home. As an unregulated site of production, the home as worksite pushes the idea of "privacy" away from the notion of domesticity and toward one of unchecked exploitation. Analyzing piecework suggests that—as has historically been the case for women of color, immigrant women, and white working class women in the United States—domestic space is a key site of work (Collins 1998; Dill 1994; Glenn 1992). This situation is increasingly relevant for precarious "digital workers" today.

Organizing Families

As community-based organizations, both CSWA and NMASS consciously address the category of family as one central to organizing. I often heard organizers ask potential members to bring their families in when they returned. Making it clear that the organization serves as a community and neighborhood space accomplishes several functions. Children can play with others and can be left under the watch of other adults. People can hang out, read, or eat, and in the process meet others working in the same industries. By stressing the importance of family, organizers also emphasize the relationship between family and organizing and between family

and work. As in the contexts of work, the positions of community and class in organizing are mutually determined and often revolve around family.

Sarah, a CSWA organizer who had been active since her teens, recalled how her involvement came about after shifts in her thinking about family, work, and organizing. The transformation began when her mother, Ms. Z, became ill and had to work less, but mostly happened through her older sister Olivia's involvement in CSWA.

I grew up in Sunset Park. When I was young, I didn't see any problems with garment work. My mother and three of my sisters all worked in garment factories when I was growing up. I had the usual immigrant thinking; you know, work hard, pull yourself up by your bootstraps. Then my mom got sick. She was very debilitated.

Just as problems with her health were affecting Ms. Z's ability to work, Olivia was becoming more and more active in CSWA.

Olivia heard about CSWA in her early twenties through friends. By the mid-1990s, she was an active youth organizer and, in 1995, participated in a weeklong hunger strike with restaurant workers and other students to protest working conditions in Chinatown restaurants. When Olivia and Sarah's mother, Ms. Z, found out that Olivia was planning to participate in the hunger strike, she came to CSWA to find out why her daughter would take part in the action, and why the organization would encourage her to do so. At first she was upset with CSWA for putting Olivia at risk. But after hearing about their organizing, she stayed and listened. Ms. Z and Sarah joined the support team for the hunger strikers. Then just a teenager, Sarah remembers seeing how "the strike brought out families and children, not just activist types." The experience galvanized Ms. Z and Sarah, and eventually they, too, became active organizers in CSWA. Olivia and Sarah would go on to become founders of NMASS.

CSWA and NMASS encourage the view that the workers' center itself is an extension of family. As in the organizations' discussions of Mrs. L's story and her maternal role, this idea not only draws upon conventional ideologies of family but also offers a more expansive definition aimed at broadening political goals. Pilar highlighted this at the retreat when she asked, "NMASS is like a family. What do we want for our own families?" CSWA describes itself similarly in outreach materials to members: "This is our family and belongs to each of us" (CSWA, Organizational materials, n.d.).

A Cross-Class Antiprecarity Movement

Standing's analysis of the precariat recognizes that the "struggle for security provides a potential source of cross-class alliance" (2015, 13). While he lists "new forms of unions or associations," among other things that "beckon" (13), he does not recognize the alternate structures and strategies of labor organizing that already exist. By contrast, Ross, in his study of the creative industries, sees that "the precariousness of work in these fields also reflects the infiltration of models of nonstandard employment from low-wage service sectors" (2008, 34). Ross argues for an antiprecarity movement to forge cross-class coalitions that "contain real elements of self-recognition and identification with the plight of those toiling in workplaces customarily associated with sweatshop labor" (43). Workers' centers are just such an important site from which to begin thinking about organizing precarious workers across class.

Workers' centers that are strongly rooted in communities, like CSWA and NMASS, are uniquely suited to address a broad set of workers' issues that are not reducible to labor politics exclusively. Low-wage immigrant women workers are among the hyperprecarious, yet often are the strongest leaders in grassroots community organizing. Both positions result from women's overlapping productive and reproductive labor in multiple spheres of life. Exploitative bosses use women's role in reproduction as rationalization for the undercompensation of their productive labor; these entwined roles often account for women's heightened awareness of community issues and needs. The dual recognition of these contrasting positions highlights the manifold roles women must negotiate as workers, as caregivers, as community members, and as organizers. Women's commitments within the family position them well to analyze the integration of community and class issues that make up community-worker organizing. Rather than privileging an elite precarious worker as its political agent, we should look to the marginalized worker embedded in complex webs of family, community, class, and culture. Her position, situated in these systems, illuminates conditions within the social factory for all workers.

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Notes

1. See, for instance, Hennebray 2014, Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2014, or Anderson 2010 on the gender and migration aspects of precarity.
2. At the time of this research, CSWA and NMASS worked on related campaigns with a third partner organization, Workers Awaaz, a workers' organization based in Jackson Heights, Queens, that no longer exists. See Varghese 2006 for an incisive and parallel discussion of worker identity in Workers Awaaz.
3. See Liu n.d for a discussion of organizers' invocation of the words of Sojourner Truth in naming their campaign.
4. I use the term *organizers* for members who self-identified or were presented to me as such, or who I saw in leadership roles. I include the handful of paid staff and some members of the Board.
5. All names are pseudonyms. Many Chinese organizers at CSWA use title (Mr., Mrs., and Ms.) and surname depending on age, familiarity, and preference. I have assigned pseudonyms with titles to reflect that convention. There are relatively few surnames in Chinese, so rather than invent false names, I use letters. For organizers who go by first names (Chinese, Latina, African American, Caribbean, Polish, and white), I assign first name pseudonyms.
6. Organizers used the word *Chinese* to refer to both "Chinese" and "Chinese American," and did not use *Asian* or *Asian American* for reasons I have discussed elsewhere, having primarily to do with class connotations and political framing (Liu 2006).
7. Elsewhere I discuss the ways organizers negotiated race, ethnicity, and immigrant status (Liu n.d.).
8. In Liu n.d., I examine how this health and safety campaign further widened the category of the worker as political subject to include injured and unemployed workers.

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