

"An Unlikely Collection of Union Militants": Portuguese Immigrant Cleaning Women Become Political Subjects in Postwar Toronto

Susana Miranda, York University, conducts research on the experiences of Portuguese immigrant women in Toronto's cleaning industry, including building, hotel, and domestic cleaning, in the post-World War Two period.

Abstract

This paper examines the ways in which Portuguese immigrant women office cleaners gained a public presence during a six-week strike in 1984, both on the picket lines and in Toronto's newspapers. Their ethnic, gender, and class identities were central in their transformation into public, political, and militant subjects.

Résumé

Cet article étudie les façons dont les immigrantes portugaises nettoyeuses de bureaux ont gagné une présence publique durant la grève de six semaines en 1984, à la fois sur les lignes de piquetage et dans les journaux de Toronto. Leurs identités soit ethnique, leur sexe ou leur classe étaient centrales dans leur transformation en sujets public, politique et militant.

On June 27, 1984, with reporters on the scene, striking cleaners at First Canadian Place, an office tower in Toronto were repeatedly warned that they would be arrested unless they left the lobby of the building. Almost all of them were Portuguese women, and they had been on strike since June 4th. They insisted on meeting with the workers, mainly young students, who had been hired to replace them during the strike. The female cleaners who earned \$5.83 an hour and male cleaners who earned \$6.97 an hour wanted a wage increase of \$.50 an hour each year for two years. Their employer, Federated Building Maintenance (FBM), which was contracted to clean First Canadian Place by the company that owned the building, Olympia and York Development (O&Y), refused to pay this increase. According to the Toronto Star, Ron Bond, a representative of O&Y pleaded with the strikers to picket outside the building, stating that they were embarrassing the building's (upper middle-class) tenants. The women refused to leave. When police were brought in, the women shouted in Portuguese and others cried as they saw those arrested being led to the police van. When surrounded by police, one woman screamed: "I'm stayed. I'm stayed," as she defiantly threw her megaphone to the ground. Another woman shouted to a police officer, "I am poor, I am poor. Will you feed my family?" At one point it took six uniformed police officers to get one screaming woman, Lucia Ferreira, a cleaner and union representative, into the police van (Harper 1984a).

This episode, like others that transpired on the picket line during the strike, received public attention in part because reporters for the Toronto English-language press considered it remarkable that a group of marginal, foreign-speaking women took to the streets to protest their exploitation in the city's wealthy financial district. This paper examines what one journalist called "an unlikely collection of union militants" (Harper 1984b), a group of Portuguese immigrant women office cleaners who, to most everyone's astonishment, led and sustained a six-week strike in 1984 against the owners of and the company contracted to clean two large financial towers in downtown Toronto. More specifically, it highlights the ways in which the women gained a public presence during the strike both on the picket lines and in the city's newspapers. I draw primarily on newspaper accounts of the strike, though, where necessary, I also make use of archival and other sources. In addition to contributing to the still-sparse literature on the Portuguese in Canada,¹ this essay raises broader questions about immigrant women's still-understudied role in the expanding service sector and in the labour activism of post-World War Two Canada. It also applies some of the recent key insights and criticisms that feminist labour historians, particularly of immigrant, ethnic, and racialized workers, have raised in response to the largely Anglo historians in Canada and the United States whose concepts and understandings of working-class femininity, female respectability, family, and militancy have been largely derived from studies of dominant majority women. Indeed, my paper reflects one of the central aims of the Labouring Feminism conference recently held in Toronto, which, as Franca Iacovetta has put it elsewhere, was "to more effectively de-centre the WASP woman worker" in Canadian and North American labour history (Iacovetta 2004). One concrete way of doing so is to continue to recover and write the history of marginal ethnic female militants, whether they belonged to a specific racial-ethnic group

or a multi-racial workforce and community. As recent publications and the Labouring Feminist conference have demonstrated, alongside the critical debates and paradigm shifts in the field, many feminist labour historians continue to recognize the importance of centring the history of such supposedly "unlikely militants" as Italian garment workers, African-American laundry workers, Latina maids, Puerto Rican tobacco workers, South Asian call centre workers, and Portuguese "cleaning ladies."² The Portuguese women who took on big capital in 1980s Toronto had lived under a dictatorship in their homeland and had no prior experience with unions, let alone organizing union drives.³ They openly identified themselves as immigrants who nevertheless had a right to decent wages and basic security and respect in a country that had long declared itself to be an enlightened, liberal immigrant-receiving nation.

Large scale migration from Portugal to Canada occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, and by 1982, approximately 137,000 Portuguese had immigrated to Canada, the majority having settled in Toronto (Giles 2002). The postwar Toronto economy contrasted sharply with Portugal's economy where agricultural stagnation and minimal industrialization left few opportunities for Portuguese male and female workers. Due to their legal status as dependents and their low educational levels, Portuguese women were confined to the lowest paid sectors of the female and ethnic job ghetto in Canada, which predominately included work in factories and cleaning hotels, private homes, and offices.⁴ Toronto's new position as Canada's most important financial centre spurred a construction of postwar skyscrapers in the heart of downtown Toronto, including in 1975 the 72 storey First Canadian Place, home to the Bank of Montreal central offices. The growth and centralization of Toronto's financial district and activity, then, stimulated a parallel growth and centralization of cleaning jobs for Portuguese and other immigrant women and men in these new towers.⁵ Alongside other groups of immigrant

women, Portuguese women were crucial workers in the expanding post World War Two service sector that so many "Canadian" women shunned in favour of white collar jobs.

The contracting out of cleaning functions within private enterprise and government departments has been on the rise since the 1970s. However, under the Ontario Labour Relations Act, cleaners and other workers who are employed through contractors receive no protection for their unions. They have no successor rights; that is, a union's collective agreement with one contractor does not carry over to another contractor, even though the same workers might be cleaning the same building (Aguilar 2000). When cleaners organize they are threatened by their employer with the possibility that the cleaning contract will be terminated due to higher costs associated with wage increases and better benefits. Thus, most cleaners are not unionized and for those who are, any gains they make from collective bargaining are easily lost with the tendering of new contracts. Often, the workers being re-hired by the new contractor do the same job they did previously, but under inferior conditions (Committee for Cleaners' Rights 1988). Private contractors rely on low wages and the intensification of work to maximize their profits and to beat their competition when bidding for a contract, and thus immigrant women are extremely low-paid workers in a sector of the service industry that relies heavily on their labour. These restrictions on the unionization of contract workers began in the 1970s as part of the larger effort of the Canadian neo-liberal state to undermine workers' collective power (Heron 1996). Also, the facts that most contract cleaners are immigrant women and the state has limited their ability to unionize and retain their union, points to power relations that, contrary to multiculturalism rhetoric, serve to privilege white male Canadians at the expense of immigrant men and, most of all, immigrant women (Das Gupta and Iacovetta 2000).

Despite the strong presence of research on

immigrant women workers in Canadian labour history, studies that investigate unionization have actually paid little attention to immigrant women.⁶ This situation leads to the perception that they have somehow been absent from or passive in workplace activism. Furthermore, there has been comparatively little analysis of immigrant women's involvement in the post World War Two labour movement, a period that saw a dramatic increase in the unionization of women workers in general. In 1979, the Canadian Food and Associated Services Union, an affiliate of the Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU), began a campaign to get the mostly Portuguese building cleaners at First Canadian Place to join their union. The CCU was active in organizing immigrant workers in Toronto through such affiliate unions as the Masons Independent Union of Canada and the Canadian Textile and Chemical Union. Their interest in organizing these cleaners stemmed from the CCU emphasis on the exploitation of immigrants and a greater willingness than that demonstrated by the Canadian Labour Congress to take on tough struggles (Lang 2007). In the case of cleaners, this meant struggling to organize contract workers with little protection in labour law and immigrant women who were generally not perceived as strong unionists by mainstream unions.

The employer, FBM, tried to block the union's certification, arguing that because most of the cleaners could not speak, write, understand or comprehend English, they could not understand the labour board notices posted in English. However, a labour board chairman ruled that language had no bearing on the validity of the union's application and the union was certified. Of the 120 eligible, 96 cleaners had signed union cards, well above the 55% required for automatic union certification. The union was certified in October 1979 to represent the employees of FBM at First Canadian Place, and the first collective agreement was negotiated and came into effect on April 13, 1980 (Deverell 1979). That almost all of the Portuguese

immigrant cleaners at First Canadian Place signed union cards indicates that these women were not only aware of their exploitation but were willing to fight for their rights despite the risk of losing incomes that were so crucial to their families' well-being. Furthermore, they participated in union politics, developed leadership skills, and took on leadership positions within this union's local, including that of president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer, as well as steward and bargaining committee positions. These immigrant cleaners can be situated as important and active members of the Canadian union movement in the post-1945 period.

A second collective agreement with FBM was executed in 1982. In 1984, the union, which had been renamed the Food and Service Workers of Canada (FASWOC), was bargaining for the third time with FBM. On June 3 the union local voted to reject a two-year contract offer, including a wage increase of \$.30 an hour effective in January 1985 (Rosenfeld 1984). The next day, 250 cleaners who cleaned First Canadian Place went on strike. The cleaners were demanding a wage increase from their employer of \$.50 per hour each year for two years retroactive to April 13, the day the contract with the union expired. In a period of heavy inflation, the wage increase the employer had offered meant little to the workers. Many of these women also held day jobs in factories or cleaned private homes in order to make ends meet. FBM refused the union's demand of a wage increase on the grounds that since O&Y (a company with a net worth of approximately \$3.5 billion) would not increase its contract price, FBM would lose their profit (Ontario Labour Relations Board 1985). For most women, this was their first strike, and they desperately wanted to fight for higher wages, despite the threats and the risk of losing their jobs.

The real possibility of injury for Portuguese immigrant men performing dangerous jobs in construction meant that many of these women were in effect the family breadwinners, although they did not appear as such on census or other records. Torontonians

first learned about them because they were profiled in newspapers such as the *Toronto Star*. They included women like Margarida Correia, who supported three small children because her injured husband had not worked for nearly four years. Another was Maria Estrella, a mother of four small children whose husband had been unable to work for seven years (Goldenberg 1984). Their situation underscored the precarious position in which working class families found themselves when a husband was unable to work.⁷ The average age of the women involved in the strike was forty years old (Applications), and most of the women were married with children. Like other working class women, these women's activism was rooted in their everyday material realities and their responsibilities to their families. However, as migrants, these women also had trans-Atlantic familial obligations. Migration not only provided new material hope for those migrating, but important material aid to their impoverished families across the Atlantic. Indeed, some women cited their inability to buy and send clothes to their families in Portugal as an impetus to fighting for higher wages (Harper 1984b). These women were thus transnational subjects who played a critical role as breadwinners for transnational family economies stretched across the ocean.⁸ Moreover, in striking, they made their own decision independent of their union leadership, which did not make any recommendation on whether to strike or not. As these were contract workers, the union knew the cleaners might not have any jobs to come back to (Iler 2006). The cleaners voted 96% in favour of a strike and actively pursued their own agenda (Crombie 1984).

Furthermore, the striking cleaners were acutely aware of their vulnerable position as immigrant workers in the Canadian economy and were prepared to talk about it publicly. In their coverage of the strike, Toronto journalists noted the deep-seated sense of disappointment expressed by women who, having come to Canada with visions of a better life and prepared to

work hard, found that they were being exploited and ignored because they were immigrants and spoke little English. As Maria Cruz, a striking cleaner, explained to a reporter on the scene: "I knew I had to work hard here, but I didn't know something like this would happen....They are trying to exploit the immigrants, especially the immigrant women. Because we are women and we do not speak English, we have no rights" (Harper 1984b). Facing exploitation as ethnic immigrant women workers, Cruz and others like her joined and actively participated in unions. They challenged their employers and the government in an effort to attain the goals they had hoped for in migration, including ensuring a better life for their children. Furthermore, compared to Portugal, Canada allowed them some space to fight for their rights as workers, and they took full advantage of this opportunity.

In taking to the streets and demanding better pay, these women also directly challenged Canada's self-proclaimed liberal image as a benevolent nation of immigrants that offered newcomers the opportunity not only to work but to eventually enjoy the status and entitlements that came with citizenship. Interestingly, in their communications with the press as well as with employers and state representatives, these women positioned themselves as immigrant women, not citizens, who were being exploited as cheap labour, even though roughly half of the women were Canadian citizens (the other half were landed immigrants). In a letter to Albert Reichmann, President of O&Y Ltd., Emilia Silva, president of the local stated "Mr. Reichmann, surely you can understand our situation. We are immigrants to this country. We take pride in our work and we work hard. We are trying to make a better life for our families" (Silva 1984). Furthermore, the taunts and insults that the women endured at the hands of critics and passers-by - antics that were also covered in the press - belied the notion that Canada was an inclusive haven for immigrants who worked hard. On the picket line, they faced shouts of "go back to your country" from

tenants of the building and passers-by (Crombie 1984). The feeling among the women was that they could not truly claim citizenship as a basis to equal rights, that they were not perceived as citizens by the wider society or the state. In their attempts to gain economic justice, they appealed instead to the public's sense of human rights, positioning themselves as poor immigrant women unscrupulously exploited by a rich corporation.

The presence of the women's family members on the picket-line was an important characteristic of this strike and probably helped in attracting media attention. As in other strikes involving married women, children became very much part of the strike (Patrias 1990). The press noted that the children played tag around the buildings and that "on most evenings, children strut along the sidewalk, carrying signs, slurping popsicles, shouting through a megaphone or generally annoying their mothers" (Goldenberg 1984). The presence of children on the picket-line had much to do with the women's inability to pay babysitters at times when their husbands were at work and could not care for them, but it also served a strategic purpose. The children were visible reminders that these women had families to support, so their presence reinforced the justice of their cause. The union encouraged husbands to join the picket line. Many of the men had developed a union consciousness and commitment to the labour movement through their experience with construction unions and they supported their wives during their picket line duties even though it meant that women were spending less time on their domestic and familial responsibilities. Significantly, the men's own experiences with unions did not promote a sense of working-class male masculinity that excluded women from unionism but instead led them to support their wives' activism. Of paramount importance was a couple's shared goal of attaining the financial security hoped for in migration and the desire for respect as immigrant workers in the Canadian economy. As Lucia Ferreira told a Star reporter, "my husband supports me. For sure, he would

like me [to be] at home, but he knows why I am here and sometimes he comes to walk on the line" (Harper 1984b).

As with other immigrant strikes, the ethnic identity of the strikers helped shape the character of the picket line and their cultural displays of picket-line behaviour and dissent reflected a fascinating blend of Portuguese rituals (including festive rituals and dances), worker solidarity, and even Catholicism. The picket line was sometimes reinforced with a Portuguese band. Other times, portable music players blared as women danced directly across from an upscale restaurant favoured by politicians and corporate leaders (Crombie 1984). A booklet of songs sung on the picket line signals the ethnic influence on working class culture. In addition to English-language working-class songs, the women sang a Portuguese translation of the song *We Shall Not Be Moved* as well as a Portuguese song to St. John, as these women were predominantly Roman Catholic. Their religious faith was very much a part of their union activism. They also sang, and danced, a wedding and party favourite, the *Bird Dance* (FASWOC songs 1984). They appropriated and continually chanted a Latin American rallying cry in Portuguese: "the people, united, will never be defeated" (McMonagle 1984). More than simply a way of gaining public attention, the ethno-cultural expressions of militancy and solidarity so central to the strike offered a way of claiming a political identity. It defined the strikers in ways that distinguished them from Anglo-Canadian society even though the strike confirmed that these women had much in common with other working-class women. For the Portuguese women who made up the majority of the cleaners on strike, the overlapping bonds of ethnic, class, and gender solidarity served to reinforce the cohesiveness of the group, and a particular form of radicalism was borne of these multiple identities.

The militancy of the strikers marked the strike as exceptional for this group of immigrant women who, as the press repeatedly noted, did not have any

experience with unions in Portugal. One reporter declared that the "strike has turned these docile women, keepers of home and hearth, into a bitter, vociferous group intent on fighting their employers" (Harper 1984b). In assuming that the women had been transformed into fighters, this reporter, of course, was drawing on the all too familiar stereotypes of immigrant women, including southern Europeans, as docile before husbands and employer alike. In fact, there is plenty of evidence that points to the women's everyday resistance at home and in the workplace (Miranda 2004). Still, it is clear that for Canadian observers, the women's militant behaviour on the picket line was in stark contrast to their perceptions of how Portuguese women would act. Even the union had expressed scepticism about the women's ability to hold a successful strike. A non-Portuguese union representative, Isabel Saez, publicly admitted that "these women are stronger than any of us thought they would be" (Harper 1984b), which made them all the more newsworthy. Most of all, these otherwise ignored immigrant women emerged from their invisibility to publicly defy their economic exploitation right at the heart of Canada's most profitable financial district. This irony also helped draw attention to their cause in the Canadian press. In defiance of the stereotype that immigrant women workers were not typical striking workers, the women themselves enlarged the definition of who could belong to an active and militant working class. In short, they redefined the political and made themselves public, political, militant, female subjects.

Picket-line anger mounted when a group of about 10 workers who had been on strike were escorted across the picket line to return to work. Four strikers were taken to hospital for injuries and one person was arrested when a shoving match started between the two groups. Tensions mounted further when the police began helping "scabs" (replacement workers) cross the picket line. Many of them had been referred by the Canada Employment Centre for Students, a federally-run agency.

Picketers shouted at strike-breakers who arrived in front of the building and attempted to block underground tunnels leading into the building. Maria Serafin stated, "I'm angry. Tell them [the students] not to take my job because I have a family to feed" (Harper 1984a). On June 13th, three women who had been picketing in one of the tunnels were assaulted by a private security guard escorting strike replacements past the picket line. The women suffered various bruises and scratches and one sprained hand and all received medical attention at Toronto General Hospital. As word of the assaults spread around the building, the women became very upset (Notes 1984). In response, the union pulled the women off all the entrances and gathered them together for a meeting in order to speak with them and calm them down. But as they did so, a cab containing scabs pulled up and the women, already agitated, rushed the car, hitting it with their hands and shouting. Maria Medeiros, a cleaner, was arrested for hitting a male supervisor from FBM with her umbrella (Nettle 1984). Such incidents made the strikers aware that they were not only fighting O&Y and FBM, but also the government. Indeed, the women were particularly incensed over the collusion of the state, through the recruitment and police protection of the strike-breakers. The women saw their aggressive and militant actions as justified in the light of the exploitation and injustice they faced. They were fiercely committed to fighting the exploitation even though it was supported by state laws.

As mentioned earlier, some Portuguese women - about twelve in all - did cross the picket line and return to work during the strike (Nettle 1984). According to a Union representative who spoke with reporters, these women had done so "under pressure from husbands to give up the strike and return to the kitchen in the Portuguese tradition" (Harper 1984b). But the union representative missed the obvious point: the women were not returning to the kitchen but returning to their jobs. The matter of paid employment was not the problem. For some couples, the presence of

women on a highly publicized and occasionally violent picket line might have caused tensions at home. Others might have also considered it an embarrassment to the Portuguese community. However, it seems clear that a woman's decision to go back to work had very little to do with a husband's notion of obedient womanhood or with dominant notions of feminine respectability, and far more to do with an immediate need for money. The loss of a regular pay cheque during the strike caused hardship to their families. They also feared that, if they lost the strike, they would probably be fired. Yet, despite such fears being widespread, the vast majority of the Portuguese women did not cross the picket line but stood firm, and their defiance is important in showing that so-called "respectable" gender norms did not dampen the militancy of this group of ethnic female strikers, as has been noted for groups of Anglo-Saxon women workers in earlier periods (Parr 1990; Sangster 1995; Sugiman 1994). Like other strikes in which immigrant women predominated, these women were not constrained either by dominant notions of femininity or working class ones (Guard 2004b; Ventresca 1996).

The striking workers received picket line support from other cleaners, including those who worked at the TD (Toronto Dominion) Centre and were organized by Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). The strikers also received picket line support from other unions and women's groups including other affiliates of the CCU, the United Auto Workers (UAW), as well as Ontario Working Women, and the Canadian Congress of Women. Support from the Portuguese community came through the Portuguese-Canadian Democratic Organization and representatives from the Portuguese Pastoral Council. All of this support from unions, women's, and community organizations also helped the cleaners gain favourable media attention and increased pressure on FBM and O&Y to settle in the union's favour. The strikers' issues also became explicitly political when their actions drew the attention of major politicians, particularly members of the federal New

Democratic Party (NDP). High profile provincial politician Bob Rae and federal politician Dan Heap joined the women on the picket line (Nettle 1984). The strike also triggered a debate that continued long after the end of the strike on successor rights in the cleaning industry and the treatment of immigrant workers in the Canadian economy. The NDP brought the issues to the attention of the Canadian public and Canadian politicians.

After six weeks, the strike ended when the cleaners accepted FBM's new offer. It provided them with a \$.35 hourly increase retroactive to April 13, when the old contract expired, and a further \$.25 increase in the second year of the agreement. As the journalists reported, when the contract was accepted, the cleaners shouted "the people, united, will never be defeated" in Portuguese. Emilia Silva shouted into a megaphone, "We have proven to everyone that we have the courage. We proved to Canada and to Olympia and York owners of the building that we are women, and we are immigrants but we can fight" (Di Manno 1984). Clearly, these women accomplished an immense feat by winning a strike against a major corporation. They also showed that female immigrants had a right to equality in Canadian society and could be strong and active union members, belying the notion that immigrant women were simply passive victims of an exploitative industrial-capitalist economy.

In the end, the strike, for all of its importance, did not secure long-term rights and security for immigrant cleaners. By February of 1986, the 250 cleaners at First Canadian Place were in danger of losing their jobs, as well as their hard won rights because O&Y was putting the cleaning contract up for tender precisely when the collective agreement was set to expire. A delegation from the FASWOC met with Liberal Ontario Premier David Peterson and Labour Minister Bill Wrye to press for successor rights legislation but they were not successful. In the meantime, the cleaners at First Canadian Place accepted

FBM's offer of a pay raise of \$0.35 cents, an increased workload, and fewer working hours. They did so because it would allow their employer to remain competitive for gaining the contract with O&Y, which meant that they could keep their jobs and the collective agreement ("Cleaning Jobs" 1986). The cleaning contract was renewed. The cleaners were forced to give up many of the gains they had made during their six week strike, as the contracting out process worked in favour of employers and business interests. It was not until 1993 under the NDP provincial government, through Bill 40, that successor rights for contract cleaners were incorporated into changes to labour law. However, Bill 7, the first major piece of legislation introduced by the Conservative Mike Harris government in 1995, eliminated successor rights (Aguilar 2000). Immigrant women were denied, once again, the right to improve their wages and working conditions.

This examination of how an "unlikely" collection of ethnic female militants mounted and sustained a six-week strike at First Canadian Place, and the press coverage as well as political debate that it engendered, provides a useful case study for examining the position of immigrant women in the Canadian post-war economy, labour movement, and neo-liberal state. Portuguese women played a crucial role in the expansion of the service sector in the post-war years while at the same time their entry reinforced an already-existing gender and ethnically-stratified workforce that was low paid and toiled in inferior conditions. These conditions were supported by state laws that limited their ability to unionize and retain their unions through the contracting out process. Yet, despite rhetoric to the contrary, immigrant women could be and were militant participants in the labour movement at a time when labour faced increasing limits on workers' power. Gender, class, and ethnic identities converged to drive this group of workers to assert their commonalities with other working class groups as well as their distinct concerns as ethnic workers. By taking protest to the

street in the heart of Toronto's financial district, and by attracting plenty of press attention, much of it sympathetic, the women became explicitly political subjects and their actions informed a much longer and larger debate on the place of immigrant women in the Canadian economy and state.

Acknowledgement

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Endnotes

1. Most scholarly work on the Portuguese in Canada has been produced by sociologists and anthropologists. See Giles 2002; Noivo 1997. For a historical work see Anderson and Higgs 1976.
2. Labouring Feminism and Working-Class History in North America and Beyond Conference, Toronto, Fall 2005; papers by Caroline Merithew, Ginetta Candelario, Teresa Carrillo, Ivette Rivero-Giusti, Jennifer Carson, Julie Guard and Mercedes Steedman. Recent publications include Gabaccia and Iacovetta 2002; Guard, 2004.
3. Under a right wing dictatorship in Portugal from 1933 to 1974, the state enacted laws forbidding strikes, organizing and collective bargaining.
4. 1981 statistics indicate that 86.96% of Portuguese-born immigrant women in Canada worked for wages: 37.30% were in manufacturing, 8.70% in accommodation and food services, and 13.46% in "other services," which includes cleaning (Giles 2002). However, the percentage of women in "other services" was surely underreported as many Portuguese immigrant women worked clandestinely in private domestic service.
5. A 1975 article cited 36,557 cleaners in Toronto, mostly immigrant women (Spiers 1975). A union organizer indicated that in Toronto cleaners were mostly Portuguese, though the Greek, Italian, Latin American, West Indian and eastern European communities were

also represented. Iler 1982.

6. Exceptions include Frager 1992; Parr 1990.
7. Franca Iacovetta discusses the participation of Italian men in dangerous construction trades in Toronto, and how injury or death adversely affected the family economy (Iacovetta 1992).
8. It is usually male migrants that are credited with sending remittances home. For example, see Ramirez 1991.

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