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Racial Uplift in a Jim Crow Local: Black Union Organizing in Minneapolis Hotels 1930-1940

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**Racial Uplift in a Jim Crow Local:
Black Union Organizing in Minneapolis
Hotels 1930-1940**

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American Studies Honors Thesis
Project Adviser: Duchess Harris
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Abstract

In the 1930s and 1940s, Minneapolis hotels employed two-thirds of all African-Americans working in the city. For black workers in Minneapolis, hotels were a site rife with contradictions: while these jobs offered prestige and union wages, they simultaneously drew upon hotel's appeal to white customers' slavery fantasy by promoting an atmosphere of racialized luxury. My research examines how narratives of respectability and racial uplift—generally at odds with the militant working-class politics of unions—became important for black hotel workers in Minneapolis, whose ability to conform to middle-class patriarchal norms was jeopardized by the submissive stereotypes promoted by hotels. Despite its status as a “Jim Crow local,” the all-black Hotel Employee and Restaurant Employee (HERE) Local 614 won significant wage increases for black waiters and represented a grassroots effort to participate in a labor movement that wanted to exclude them. Drawing from oral histories with the black leadership of Local 614 and its close ally, the integrated HERE Local 665, I argue that unions offered a few individuals an opportunity to rise from just another rank-and-file waiter to an influential leader. Leadership gained status both within a mostly white labor movement and the class-stratified black Minnesotan community, shaping the early civil rights movement in Minneapolis. The story of how these workers, mostly waiters in the dining rooms of the city's finest hotels, deepens our understanding of the complicated position of black workers in the 1930-1940 labor movement by illuminating the diversity of the motivations and ideologies that informed black union leaders in Local 614 and Local 665.

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Chapter 1.

A Tug of Curiosity



Figure 1: Curtis Hotel Postcard, circa 1940s

When members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE) gathered in Minneapolis at the Curtis Hotel for their biennial convention in the summer of 1934, the city was in the midst of a pivotal truck driver strike. Just weeks before the convention two strikers had been shot dead by Minneapolis police. Governor Floyd Olson declared martial law, deploying thousands of National Guard to the streets, arresting union leaders and seizing the Teamsters' strike headquarters.¹ At a session of the convention, four hundred striking truck drivers marched in, and to cheering delegates, HERE Secretary Robert Hesketh presented the

¹ Bryan Palmer, "Red Teamsters," *Jacobin*, October 14, 2014, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/10/red-teamsters/>; For a more detailed history of the 1934 strike, see Farrell Dobbs, *Teamster Rebellion*, [1st ed.]. (New York, NY: Monad Press, 1972) and Bryan D. Palmer, *Revolutionary Teamsters: The Minneapolis Truckers' Strikes of 1934*, 2013.

truckers with a \$1,000 check for their strike fund on behalf of HERE. The Teamsters accepted the check and declared that once they won the strike, “No non-union cook, waiter or bartender would be found working in Minneapolis”.² The Teamsters won their strike and kept their promise: by 1940 over 4,000 culinary workers in the Twin Cities had joined HERE, turning the region into one of the most strongly unionized in the country.³

In August 1934, the dining room of the Curtis Hotel, shown in the Figure 1 postcard, would have been bustling with HERE delegates.⁴ The white tablecloths, fine china and sparkling silver elegantly displayed in this postcard were only one component of how the Curtis Hotel displayed its luxurious ambiance to dining delegates arriving from Chicago, San Francisco and New York. Absent from the postcard are the black waiters of the Curtis Hotel.⁵ HERE members were hotel workers—everyone would have known why hotels employed black workers, even if few of those black workers were allowed to be HERE members. The white dominated HERE leadership chose to have its mostly white delegates served by black waiters. Tucked into the convention proceedings, between a speech by Minnesota Governor Olson welcoming the delegates and a brief appearance by a representative of the Minnesota Liquor Dealers’ Association, is Edward Hayes, representing “Waiters’ Local 614”.⁶ Hayes sang two tenor solos, “The Waters of Minnetonka” and “Trees”, to thunderous applause lasting several

² Matthew Josephson, *Union House, Union Bar; the History of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union, AFL-CIO*. (New York: Random House, 1956), 209.

³ “Hotel Trade Progress Told by Ray Wright,” *Minneapolis Labor Review*, November 22, 1940; “Hotel-Restaurant Workers Begin Drive,” *Minneapolis Labor Review*, March 2, 1934.

⁴ Main Restaurant, The Curtis Hotel, Minneapolis, U.S.A., circa 1940s. CardCow.com. Accessed April 21, 2016, <https://www.cardcow.com/stock-photo/542313/>.

⁵ The absence may be a sign of the shifting racial consumer preferences discussed in Chapter 3. Unlike the earlier postcards and photos of hotels in New York and Chicago, which prominently included black workers, the Curtis Hotel seems to leave it up to the viewer to fill in the blank space with the worker they desired—either a black man or white woman.

⁶ Awkwardly, Governor Olson jokingly promised not to send troops to break up the convention. It is unclear how that was received. “Proceedings of the 27th General Convention Hotel and Restaurant Employees’ and Beverage Dispensers’ International Alliance,” *The Catering Industry Employee* 43, no. 9 (September 1934).

minutes.⁷ Hayes and 75 other black waiters at the Curtis Hotel were members of the all-black Hotel and Restaurant Waiters' Union Local 614, an affiliate of HERE. Neither Local 614's role in running soup kitchens to feed hungry striking truck drivers, nor that the waiters of the hotel hosting the convention were members of HERE, was recorded in the convention proceedings.⁸ The 1934 convention marked a substantial shift in HERE's policies toward non-white members. Resolution No. 59 banned racial restrictions of membership by locals. Sam Harris and Leo Metz of Local 614 were among the delegates who introduced Resolution No. 72, ordering existing locals to admit non-white members.⁹ The *Minneapolis Spokesman* wrote that the black delegates "wield a power and influence out of all proportion to their numbers", triumphantly titling the article "Race Delegates Play Prominent Part in National Union Meet".¹⁰

Founded in 1930, Local 614 was a rare all-black local in Minnesota and played a major role in hotel organizing in Minneapolis following 1934.¹¹ With hotels employing two-thirds of all blacks working in Minneapolis, the ability to join and lead a union was of vital importance to black workers. Black leadership of Local 614 laid the groundwork for the overall integration of the Minnesota labor movement and proved instrumental in leading the early civil-rights movement in Minnesota. In 1935, Local 614 leadership helped found the first integrated union in Minnesota, the Miscellaneous Workers Local 665, also affiliated with HERE.¹² Local 614 and

⁷ "Culinary Meet Gives Olson Big Ovation," *Minneapolis Labor Review*, August 17, 1934.

⁸ Anthony Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, interview by Carl Ross, December 1, 1981, 11, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁹ "Proceedings of the 27th General Convention Hotel and Restaurant Employees' and Beverage Dispensers' International Alliance," 115, 118.

¹⁰ "Race Delegates Play Prominent Part in National Union Meet," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, August 17, 1934.

¹¹ The accuracy of 1930 is unclear. Cassius said 1930 in his interview, Minneapolis newspapers mention Local 614 first in 1932 and HERE records don't list Local 614 until 1934.

¹² Jennifer A Delton, *Making Minnesota Liberal: Civil Rights and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 66–67.

Local 665 eventually merged with other HERE locals and became what today is UNITE HERE Local 17 in Minneapolis.

By focusing on Local 614 and Local 665, I put black-led unions of service workers at the center of a narrative dominated by white factory workers—a narrative in which black service workers are not seen as having an active role. Labor relations between white and black workers in Minneapolis reflect a long tradition of racism and violence. The stories of Local 614 and Local 665 broaden our understanding of the history of union organizing, illuminating the circumstances that encourage and discourage cross-racial, cross-ethnic and cross-gender solidarity. To navigate a job implicated in a slavery fantasy by white customers required the invocation of respectability—generally at odds with the militant working-class politics of unions—by black hotel workers, whose ability to conform to middle-class patriarchal norms would otherwise be jeopardized. Overall, black leadership in Local 614 and Local 665 saw labor as an integrating force, both in the opportunities it presented them as individuals and in agendas for which they fought—as something that could pull a secluded black community into the political and economic mainstream. Organizing offered an opportunity to rise from just another subservient migrant black waiter to a powerful union leader, gaining status both within a mostly white labor movement and the class-stratified black Minnesotan community. However, emphasis of respectability limited who was and was not able to be seen as a leader. The story of Local 614 and Local 665 deepens our understanding of the complicated position of black workers in the 1930s labor movement by illuminating how black service workers navigated a myriad of contradictions at the workplace, in their union and within black communities in Minneapolis. By embracing these contradictions, we can better understand Minnesota history and learn from the struggles of Local 614 and Local 665 to advance organizing today.

Chapter 2 surveys existing literature on service workers and race, laying out how Local 614 and Local 665 fit into this scholarly conversation. For blacks, service work and the legacy of slavery are closely intertwined. In Minneapolis, hotels with black staff acted as sites of race production by cementing in the public's mind the connection between white tablecloths, fine china, sparkling silver and black service workers. Just as attending a minstrel show could solidify one's whiteness, so could the act of being served by black waiters. The performance by black workers of an aura of dignity and subservience and the visible blackness of the worker were instrumental in displaying a hotel's luxurious ambiance.

Chapter 3 traces connections between slavery in Minnesota and hotels. The most critical factor for blacks in Minnesota was their small number, with the Great Migration having a minimal impact on the number of black residents in the state. Responding to racism and the small size of the small community, black Minneapolis residents turned inwards, created string networks of social groups. To younger blacks, who felt stifled by these social networks, labor organizing became an escape. Hotels were an important employer of blacks in Minneapolis, largely due to the racialization of service work discussed in Chapter 2. Simultaneously, hotel jobs were seen as prestigious and census records reveal that black hotel workers and especially union hotel workers had the trappings of middle-class respectability. For blacks in Minnesota, few other places to work, union organizing offered a chance to reverse the decline of the prestige of hotel jobs.

Chapter 4 examines the history of hotel unionism, focusing on Local 614 and Local 665 in Minneapolis. For the most part, blacks were excluded from unions. In response, blacks formed independent unions. While these unions existed for the most part because of segregation in unions, all-black locals occupied a similar role as independent black unions, allowing black

workers to elect their own leaders and access to the benefits of collective bargaining. Early attempts by white organizers to organize black hotel workers in Minneapolis failed. Local 614 and Local 665 formed in the midst of a period of immense debates among workers, intellectuals and union officials over the role of black hotel workers in unions and what these unions should look like. As these unions gained political power, they pushed Minnesota's civil-rights organizations to adopt priorities to address the needs of working-class blacks.

Chapter 5 analyzes oral histories from Anthony Cassius, a president of Local 614 and Albert Allen and Nellie Stone Johnson, both vice presidents of Local 665. Cassius highlights the central role he played in forming Local 614 by contrasting himself with other, reluctant-to-organize black waiters, building a narrative of himself as an “exceptional” black. Allen viewed Local 665 as a way to be seen as an individual and create a non-racial identity as a labor leader. Johnson had very different, more political goals—shaped by the additional barriers she faced as black woman—but still saw labor as a way to advance a political agenda. All three saw the labor movement as an integrating force both in the opportunities it presented them as individuals and in agendas for which they fought—as something that could pull a secluded black community into the political and economic mainstream.

Chapter 6 concludes by arguing that racism, the Great Depression and the demographic realities of a small black community acted as a ceiling limiting not only the aspirations and political decisions of these black activists but also who could be seen as a leader in the first place. With the prestige of hotel jobs fading, and trapped between performing plantation culture at work and a parochial community at home, Local 614 and Local 665 emphasized respectability in order to gain status in a white labor movement. Respectability, however, shaped who was able to be seen as a leader and what types of resistance were viewed as “legitimate”. For black workers

in Minneapolis, hotels were a site rife with contradictions. I cannot fully resolve these contradictions but they nevertheless motivated and limited Local 614 and Local 665's membership and leadership's choices, challenges and behaviors.

Before I begin my essay, I want to explain my motivations in writing this essay. Michael Honey, in his book of oral histories of black workers in Memphis, Tennessee, *Black Workers Remember*, explains that his work as a community and racial justice organizer in the South in the 1970s "kindled a curiosity to learn, as songwriter and union organizer John Handcox put it, about 'those who fought and died before'".¹³ After several years of organizing with UNITE HERE, when I stumbled across the oral histories of black hotel waiters at the Minnesota Historical Society's archives, I felt that tug of curiosity as well. In his conclusion, Honey writes that, "the older workers who spoke their minds to me worried most about whether the lessons of the past would be lost".¹⁴ Many of the workers interviewed by Honey feared not only the loss of the hard-won gains of the past but also of the organizational strengths and the organizing history of their communities that is crucial to motivating current and future activists.¹⁵ As our generation struggles with the daunting task of organizing against unprecedented corporate power in increasingly fluid, transnational labor markets, I find inspiration during moments of hopelessness in the stories of those who struggled against both their boss and their own union for justice. At the same time, I recognize the limitations I bring to this essay: as a middle-class white student, I cannot claim to fully understand the impacts of racism on black hotel waiters in Minneapolis nor can I fully explain their motivations in organizing a union. With that said, I have repeatedly

¹³ Michael K Honey, *Black Workers Remember: An Oral History of Segregation, Unionism, and the Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 367.

¹⁵ Mary Jo. Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara. Laslett, *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 51.

found my privileged position as a Macalester student and my connections to UNITE HERE incredibly helpful in research, allowing unique access to people and material.

The voices of working-class people—least of all working-class blacks— are rarely recorded in official histories or textbooks. As I began my research, I was struck by the lack of material on blacks in the Minnesota labor movement, particularly before the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). In his introduction, Honey explains that the articles in labor newspapers and the interviews with mostly white union leadership leave out the voices of black workers, a major obstacle in writing histories of black unionists.¹⁶ While this essay focuses only on the stories of a few hotel workers, their stories comprise a larger collective memory that “personalizes the...struggles of a larger group” and provides a “bottom-up” perspective on Minnesota labor history.¹⁷ George Holloway, a black union organizer Honey interviewed, describes himself and his fellow unionists as “witnesses...to a hidden history of struggle for freedom”.¹⁸ By bringing new, often marginalized voices into a mainstream record, the oral histories of Cassius, Allen and Johnson give “invaluable witness, critiques and alternative narratives” of a hidden history of Minnesota.¹⁹

In *Rainbow at Midnight*, George Lipsitz argues that working people and their interests have been absent from most public discussions about our national political and cultural life. This erasure of the working-class from popular consciousness has left a “terrible void” and hides the disasters created by deindustrialization, free trade and privatization. Lipsitz writes, “I believe that today’s problems and tomorrow’s possibilities can come into clearer focus if we understand the ways in which the political battles of the postwar era shaped the contours of this country’s

¹⁶ Honey, *Black Workers Remember*, 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁹ Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett, *Telling Stories*, 6–7.

economic, cultural and political life”.²⁰ The invisibility of labor keeps us from learning from its victories and errors. Local 614 and Local 665 won substantial victories for hotel workers in Minnesota. At the same time, only a select few of their leadership received public recognition and remembrance. Learning from labor does not mean looking for perfect people or for times without troubles. Rather, learning from labor means trying to understand the roots of present problems in past policies or decisions and to position ourselves for the future by understanding the legacy of labor’s past struggles for democracy in their workplace and in their union. With this goal in mind, there is much we can learn from Local 614 and Local 665. For current organizing, Local 614 and Local 665’s successful victories and the problematic narratives of leadership can offer guidance. The connections between servility, racism and slavery that shaped the formation of service work can offer a new framing of campaigns, particularly in challenging the existence of tipping. In Minnesota history, narratives of black resistance are rarely in the public mind. This invisibility is magnified by narrow definitions of what is allowed to be seen as a “political” act. Overall, Local 614 and Local 665 act as a counter-narrative that shifts what we imagine as possible.

²⁰ George. Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 1–4, Table of contents <http://www.gbv.de/dms/bowker/toc/9780252063947.pdf>.

Chapter 2.

“An Intelligent Polished Piece of Ebony”: Black Service Workers, Slavery and the Display of Luxury

In his 1945 memoir *Black Boy*, Richard Wright recalls his time working in a Chicago hotel alongside Shorty, a well-read black elevator operator and outspoken activist on the injustices of racism. To get tips from whites, however, Wright explains that Shorty “would play the role of a clown of the most debased and degraded type”.¹ After Shorty tells Wright, “Just watch me get a quarter from the first white man I see”, Wright spends two pages describing in great detail how Shorty begged a white man to kick him in return for a tip. Wright, feeling disgusted, confronts him, arguing that no tip was worth that indignation. Shorty responds, “Listen, nigger, my ass is tough and quarters is scarce”. Wright never mentioned it to Shorty again. Recalling the discussions about lynching, socialism and organizing during breaks, Wright writes that “Each of us hated and feared the whites, yet had a white man put in a sudden appearance we would have assumed silent, obedient smiles”.² These performances of servility and docility by Wright’s co-workers defined the experiences of black service workers and their interactions with white customers in hotels, restaurants and train cars.

Little scholarship exists that offers an analysis of the complicated and contradictory intersections of race, class and gender identity among service workers in luxury occupations like Wright and Shorty. My goal in this chapter is to examine scholarship on service workers and race. The experiences of black service workers demonstrates the shortcomings of existing literature but by placing an interdisciplinary group of scholars in conversation together, we are

¹ Richard Wright, *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth*, 7th ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), 198.

² *Ibid.*, 199–200.

able to develop a theory of service work predicated on a history of slavery and racialized displays of luxury. During the 1930s, labor unions arose from the ashes of previous defeats to become a political force that shaped the lives of American workers for decades. Labor historians and sociologists, however, have long ignored the unique experiences of non-white workers in unions, particularly service workers. Struggling to keep pace of an increasingly postindustrial economy, few scholars study service workers and low union density, poor job conditions and high turnover—the very reasons marginalized workers fill service jobs—impair research. Traditional Marxist theory views blue-collar factory workers, with their close proximity to the means of production, as a critical force to revolutionary movements, contributing to scholarly neglect—a neglect informed by an underlying bias against job categories employing mostly women of color.³

There are two key differences between traditional factory labor and interactive service work: first, rather than producing cars or electronics, in service work the treatment of the client by the worker is a key part of what is being bought and sold. Second, consumers play a more central role in service work. In manufacturing, the produced goods are sold in markets far away, so customers never see the workers. In service work, customers are physically present as the interactive good is “created”, with production and consumption occurring simultaneously. The relationship between factory workers and managers becomes a three-way relationship in service work: workers, managers and customers.⁴ These differences between service work and factory work require unique analysis. Overall, little has been written on how the experiences of black

³ Greta Foff. Paules, *Dishing It out: Power and Resistance among Waitresses in a New Jersey Restaurant*, *Women in the Political Economy*; *Women in the Political Economy*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 17–18, Table of contents <http://www.gbv.de/dms/hbz/toc/ht004196282.PDF>.

⁴ Rachel Sherman, *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 8, Table of contents <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip067/2006003726.html>.

service workers differ from that of white service workers. The omission of race by researchers both limits the applicability of much of the existing analysis to my topic and hurts the overall analysis because the wrong questions were asked in the first place. A substantial body of literature exists about the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), an all-black union of train porters. This research is excellent but the situation of the BSCP was highly unique. The vast majority of black union members were not in independent, all-black unions—they were members of unions that were often white led and integrated to varying degrees.

As explained in Chapter 1, my research on Local 614 and Local 665—black-led unions of service workers—is an intervention into a scholarly conversation dominated by the experiences of industrial workers.⁵ Section 1 begins with three primary sources on service workers, Matthew Josephson’s *Union House, Union Bar: The History of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union*, William Whyte’s *Human Relations in the Restaurant Industry* and an essay by L.S. Chumley in Peter Rachleff’s *Starving Amidst Too Much*, examining how fines and regulations function to create distinct hierarchies between guests and workers. Section 2 explores Arlie Hochschild’s foundational sociological study of service jobs, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* and two case studies that draw heavily on Hochschild’s analysis, Greta Paules’ *Dishing It Out: Power and Resistance among Waitresses in a New Jersey Restaurant* and Rachel Sherman’s *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels*. Sherman’s concept of “consent” in luxury workplaces is the main theoretical framework of this research. Section 3 focuses on Robin Kelley’s *Race Rebels*, which offers a groundbreaking framework to understanding black service workers. Mathew Biju in *Taxi!* expands on the response to resistance by non-white service workers.

⁵ For an overview of the field of labor history, see Herbert Hill, “The Importance of Race in American Labor History,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 9, no. 2 (December 1, 1995): 317–43.

Section 4 examines the connections between tips and servility, drawing from newspaper accounts of the slow entrenchment of tipping in the US in the early 1900s. Section 5 looks at how service work and the legacy slavery are closely intertwined, starting with W. E. B. Du Bois' *Darkwater*. Much of this literature focuses on the BSCP, of which I discuss David Perata's *Those Pullman Blues*, Jack Santino's *Miles of Smiles*, *Years of Struggle* and Beth Tompkins Bates' *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America*. Thomas Castillo's chapter "Chauffeuring in a White Man's Town" published in *Florida's Working-Class Past* looks at how this expectation of servility could at the same time protect certain jobs for blacks. Section 6 concludes by explaining how, by tapping into nostalgia for slavery by white customers, black workers were used by luxurious hotels and train companies to display luxury. I analyze hotel advertisements and menus to show how, lacking the plantations of the south, hotels became a place of racial production in Minnesota.

Section 1: Labor Histories of Service Workers

In his silent film *The Last Laugh*, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau portrays how the hotel concentrates economic and racial segregation into a tiny space, contrasting the pulsating big city life of the rich and the luxurious Hotel Atlantic with the shabby housing of the hotel workers. The central character of the film, an unnamed doorman, crosses the border between these two worlds. While Murnau's doorman is white, we can understand how this crossing of boundaries becomes more extreme for black workers, commuting from racially segregated housing to brush elbows with white business elites at the Curtis Hotel or Minneapolis Athletic Club. For Murnau's doorman—and black hotel workers—this crossing between segregated boundaries is facilitated by their position at the hotel. The uniform, as a status symbol, grants access to the

hotel and its guests. Outside of the hotel, the uniform visibly transforms the doorman into an ambassador to an inaccessible world, providing status through its attachment to the upper-class.⁶ However, while the uniform worn by black hotel workers in Minneapolis did hold status as it represented a stable, well-paying union job, it simultaneously symbolized their invisibility and expectation of servility.

To begin to discuss Murnau, I turn to scholarship focusing on hotel workers. Josephson's *Union House, Union Bar*. *Union House, Union Bar* is an official history of HERE, commissioned at the 1953 convention and published in 1956 by the union as an educational tool for membership. The inclusion of the experiences of dozens of cooks, waiters, bartenders and other hotel workers by Josephson shines light on what individual members thought about their jobs and their union.⁷ On the other hand, William Whyte's *Human Relations in the Restaurant Industry* was financed by the National Restaurant Association with the explicit goal of helping restaurant managers run smoothly operating restaurants.⁸ Whyte's research was published in 1948 and is cited several times by Josephson.

For Josephson, service workers suffer because they serve “two bosses, the customer on the one hand and their supervisor or headwaiter on the other—who often do not have the same interests”.⁹ Quoting George Orwell's autobiography on his time as a waiter in Paris, Josephson argues that even despite the physical demands of the job, the strain of a hotel employee “...was more *mental* than physical”.¹⁰ An interviewed waiter explains, “The trouble is, when the guests get nasty with you, you can't tell them off. You have to keep it all inside you. That's what

⁶ F. W. Murnau, *The Last Laugh* (Film Renters, Inc., 1924).

⁷ Matthew Josephson, *Union House, Union Bar; the History of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union, AFL-CIO*. (New York: Random House, 1956), Foreword pg 2.

⁸ William Foote Whyte, *Human Relations in the Restaurant Industry*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1948), v.

⁹ Josephson, *Union House, Union Bar; the History of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union, AFL-CIO*, 89. Edited for gendered language.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 88. Emphasis original.

makes it so nerve-wracking”.¹¹ Josephson’s neglect of race is not unexpected, given the era in which it was written, but themes still offers useful analysis. Black waiters, when facing nasty customers and nasty bosses, “can’t tell them off” both because they are waiters and because they are black. For black waiters, the stakes are much higher—black waiters potentially risked far more than a tip if they rejected the expectations of their invisibility.

In addition to hotel workers’ poor working conditions and low wages, extensive use of workplace regulations by hotels and restaurants enforced hierarchies between guests and workers. An elaborate system of fines for dropping plates, being late, talking too much to customers, not standing at their station, drinking leftover coffee or daring to eat customer food chipped away at the already low wages—and distinctly divided the customer from the subservient worker.¹² John Goins, in his 1902 guide *The American Colored Waiter* devotes several pages to avoiding fines.¹³ In 1918, Industrial Workers of the Worker (IWW) organizer L.S. Chumley, explains hundreds of contradictory rules trapping hotel workers, “You are fined for talking and for not talking; for smiling and not smiling; for working slow, for working too fast; for making a noise, for not being servile...In fact you must ask permission to do anything and yet, you may be fined for asking”.¹⁴ Anthony Cassius explained in his oral history how every week, half or more of his pay went to pay fines:

If they caught you with any cream in your coffee they charged you a nickel; if they caught you with a pat of butter you had to pay nickel ; if you broke a glass, (which in waitering you're bound to break something,) that was all deductible . So there was no way for you to get seventeen dollars a month.¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid., 89.

¹² Ibid., 86.

¹³ John B. Goins, *The American Colored Waiter*, Hotel Monthly Handbook Series; Hotel Monthly Handbook Series. (Chicago: Hotel monthly, 1902), 91.

¹⁴ Peter J. Rachleff et al., *Starving amidst Too Much: & Other IWW Writings on the Food Industry*, 1st ed., Labor Classics; Labor Classics. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Pub. Co., 2005), 76–77.

¹⁵ Anthony Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, interview by Carl Ross, December 1, 1981, 3, Minnesota Historical Society.

A 1939 report by the New York Department of Labor found dozens of cases where deductions for fines exceeded the weekly earning of waiters.¹⁶ Hotels saved money on wages with the use of fines. Equally important, however, was the clear hierarchy these regulations set up between workers and guests: only guests were entitled to coffee in their cream and a pat of butter, not the workers.

The Curtis Hotel's archives reveal an extensively regulated workplace. A 1929 memo reminded staff to "always smile and bow pleasantly" to "show every person coming into our hotel that you are most happy to be of service to them". Another stated management "do not wish our employees to be politically active" to avoid offending guests—and presumably discourage union organizing. Guests were to be greeted with, "Good morning, sir" or "Good morning, ma'am and never with "hullo".¹⁷ A list titled "Give Proper Service" lists thirty-two rules for Curtis Hotel waiters:

1. Don't chew gum on duty.
2. Don't talk in loud tone of voice.
3. Don't argue with guests or with your fellow workers.
4. Don't harbor a grouch.
5. Don't be late to work.
6. Don't use perfume.
7. Don't handle food with fingers in; use fork or ladle.
8. Don't scratch your head in the presence of guests.
9. Don't give carless or indifferent service.
10. Don't serve a guest with a glass of warm water, unless requested.
11. Don't wear flashy clothing or jewelry.
12. Don't serve hot foods on cold plates.
13. Don't smoke on duty.
14. Don't eat while on duty except on your allotted time.
15. Don't read in the presence of guests.
16. Don't pick your teeth or clean your nails in the dining room.

¹⁶ New York (State) and New York (State), eds., *Report of the Industrial Commissioner to the Restaurant Minimum Wage Board, Relating to Wages and Other Conditionsof Employment of Women and Minors in the Restaurant Industry, New York State* ([Albany?, 1939), 18.

¹⁷ Curtis Hotel, "Curtis Hotel Staff Regulations," n.d., Curtis Hotel Records, Box 1, Minnesota Historical Society.

17. Don't comb or arrange your hair around food or tables.
18. Don't pick up glasses or cups by placing fingers inside.
19. Don't cough or clean your throat in dining room.
20. Don't appear on the floor in untidy clothing.
21. Don't forget to shave, comb your hair, clean your nails and have your shoes shined before going on duty.
22. Don't be late to work. Allow sufficient time to attend to the details of your section.
23. Don't nurse a grouch in the presence of your guests.
24. Don't overlook the value of diplomacy in waiting on an eccentric guest.
25. Don't show indifference toward your guests.
26. Don't forget the guest is always right.
27. Don't give careless, slipshod service.
28. Don't raise your voice in talking to guests. Speak quietly and clearly.
29. Don't forget good service helps to increase the number of guests, which means an increased amount of tips.
30. Don't be a disgrace to your profession. Be a gentleman at all times.
31. Don't sacrifice efficiency of mere speed.
32. Don't be irritably slow.
33. Don't make mistakes in adding checks; they are costly to your employer and annoying to your guests.¹⁸

Many of the regulations listed above could be used to target black workers seen as deviating from the idealized model of a black servant. For example, the Radisson Hotel fired a black housecleaner after she dyed her hair blond and it took the intervention of the Minneapolis mayor to get her back to work.¹⁹ Certain regulations also served to enforce racial hierarchies between white and black workers. Marvin Roger Anderson, a waiter at a St. Paul hotel, described in an oral history how black waiters didn't take orders, the white steward did. The waiter described food, the steward then wrote down the order, gave it to waiter to take back to cook and then brought out the food, and finally the steward calculated the bill.²⁰ Some hotels went even farther, explained HERE organizer John Bookjans, "Formerly the owner of a small inn had

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Raymond Wright, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Raymond R. Wright, interview by Carl Ross, November 1, 1981, 72, Minnesota Historical Society.

²⁰ Kate. Cavett et al., *Voices of Rondo: Oral Histories of Saint Paul's Historic Black Community* (Minneapolis: Syren Book Co., 2005), 192.

known all his employees by their first name. But now in the large hotels the waiters were known only be a number they wore on their badges”.²¹ The invisibility inherent in service jobs came at a high cost: Chumley emphasizes the dehumanizing nature of the work by repeating a common joke among waiters that a newspaper article about a train wreck read “there were seven people, two dogs, and a waiter killed”.²²

In *Human Relations in the Restaurant Industry*, Whyte offers advice to restaurant management on avoiding employee problems—a sharp contrast to Josephson and Chumley’s decrying of what they see as an evil system. Whyte comments, “...waiters find it difficult to adjust to the constant subordination to customers that is involved in their work”, noting that the lack of jobs in the Depression greatly increased customer pressure, as waiters could not afford to risk losing their jobs.²³ This pressure is only amplified for black workers, who faced even stricter standards and higher unemployment. Describing tips as a “social rating system”, Whyte notes that waiters feel some customers use “their tipping power to demand a subservient attitude” and blame the tipping system for the expectation of inferiority to customers.²⁴ Of particular value is Whyte’s appendix of unedited interview responses, which provide an unfiltered look at the impact of normalized servility of service jobs. One waiter condemned the system: “This tipped business is a great evil. You know, waiters have inferiority complexes...It’s the tipping system that does it...It gives him an inferiority complex. You know—makes him feel he’s at the mercy of the customer all the time”.²⁵

²¹ Josephson, *Union House, Union Bar; the History of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union, AFL-CIO.*, 86; John Dismukes Green, *The Back of the House* (New York: Gehring Pub. Co, 1925), 25.

²² Rachleff et al., *Starving amidst Too Much*, 73.

²³ Whyte, *Human Relations in the Restaurant Industry.*, 94–95.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 98–99.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 372.

The interviews also highlight how gendered service jobs are, with another waiter saying, “You can’t be a man when you are a waiter. That’s right. You aren’t a man. You are just a servant. You can’t talk back to people. Everything you have to take... You can’t be a man and be a waiter at the same time. You have to put off being a human being while you are at work”.²⁶ These comments offer insight into understanding why highly gendered service jobs are available for black workers, who are constantly emasculated under white supremacy and the high stakes of the manhood rhetoric seen in black unions. The ever present reminder of being “at the mercy of the [white] customer” serves to enforce the lower status of black workers. Whyte goes on to argue the psychological impacts of workplace subordination are more drastic for men—presumably white men—because, “...for men, growing up in a man’s world, are not accustomed to the continual subordination they face from customers”.²⁷ Whyte does not criticize this “continual subordination” of workers but instead implicitly suggests white women or black workers—whom Whyte sees as accustomed to subordination because they live in a “[white] man’s world”—make better service workers.

Whyte’s frank discussion of race is similarly insightful, as it offers a perspective rarely voiced publicly. Whyte explains how managers group black workers into two categories, the “loyal” and the “disloyal”. Disloyal are “thought to be shiftless, dishonest and aggressive toward whites” while loyal blacks are the “exceptions” and are “dependable, honest and submissive to whites”.²⁸ White managers value the “humility” of black workers above traits like dependability and honesty, considering it essential that blacks “know their place, which meant that they must

²⁶ Ibid., 370.

²⁷ Ibid., 97.

²⁸ Ibid., 174; For a more detailed analysis of the role of race in labor management, see David R. Roediger and Elizabeth D. Esch, *The Production of Difference: Race and the Management of Labor in U.S. History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

be satisfied with a position below that of whites”.²⁹ Whyte gives several examples. Sarah, a young black woman, is praised because “she knows her place” and conforms to the moral standards of white management—to the extreme of taking her manager’s name when she marries.³⁰ For black workers, both their race and the expectations of the job contribute to requiring servility. For Murnau’s white doorman, the uniform and adherence to workplace regulations are enough to access the segregated space of a hotel. However, Shorty, the black elevator operator in Wright’s autobiography, had to go beyond just the duties of his job and actively degrade himself to receive tips from white customers.

Section 2: [White] Service Workers in Sociological Literature

Arlie Hochschild’s *The Managed Heart* is a foundational text for sociological studies of service jobs. Hochschild, struggling to apply Marxist theory written in the 1800s to modern flight attendants, argues that flight attendants, in addition to their physical labor, do something more, which Hochschild terms “emotional labor”. Emotional labor is defined as labor that “requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others—in this case, the sense [by airplane passengers] of being cared for in a convivial and safe place”.³¹ Just as the management of factory worker’s speed and motion alienates them from their body, a flight attendant’s employer claims control over their emotions, alienating them from their mind. For the flight attendant and the waiter, smiles and upbeat mood are part of their work.³² Poorly disguised fatigue or irritation undercuts

²⁹ Whyte, *Human Relations in the Restaurant Industry.*, 174–175. Edited for gendered language.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 174.

³¹ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 7, Table of contents http://library.mpib-berlin.mpg.de/toc/z2007_1672.pdf.

³² *Ibid.*, 7–8.

emotional labor because “...the labor would show in an unseemly way and the product—passenger contentment—would be damaged”.³³ In summary, service workers must manipulate either their actual feelings or the appearance of their feelings in order to satisfy the perceived requirements of the job create a certain state of mind in the customer.

Hochschild argues emotional labor contributes to the creation of hierarchical class structure because to have higher status is to have a stronger claim to rewards, including emotional rewards. Deferential behavior of service workers—encouraging smiles, attentive listening, constant reassurances and affirmation—became normalized for both workers and the upper-class.³⁴ At some point, the worker begins to wonder whether their smile and the emotional labor that keeps it sincere are truly theirs because it relies on “deep acting”, the expression of “a real feeling that has been self-induced”—actually feeling what one is supposed to be displaying.³⁵ As Hochschild questions, “Do they [the smiles] really express a part of her? Or are they deliberately worked up and delivered on behalf of the company? Where inside *her* is the part that acts on behalf of the company?”³⁶ Hochschild does not discuss race but her questions raise similar themes to contemporary discussions of internalized oppression. Tunis Campbell, a black headwaiter in New York, stressed in his 1848 guide for waiters the need of both customers and waiters to “feel their identity”.³⁷ Curtis Hotel regulations for waiters defined hospitality as “genuine love” for guests.³⁸ As the black waiter struggles with becoming alienated from their service, as they slowly become trapped by “feeling their identity”, does their emotional labor—

³³ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 7–8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 84–85.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁶ Emphasis original. *Ibid.*, 133.

³⁷ Tunis G. Campbell, *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers' Guide*. (Boston,: Print. by Coolidge and Wiley, 1848), 7.

³⁸ Curtis Hotel, “Curtis Hotel Staff Regulations.”

expected both because of the job and their race—performed merely to keep the job or, as Hochschild asks, “...really express a part of her?”

In *Dishing It Out*, Paules studies restaurant waiters. Contradicting Whyte, Paules argues that waiters do not lament poor tips as personal failures but instead see view tips as a reflection of “the negative qualities and low status of the customer who is too cheap, too poor, too ignorant or too coarse to leave appropriate gratuity”. This attitude is emphasized by the rhetoric of waiters, who instead of saying they “get good tips”, they say they “make good tips”.³⁹ However, Josephson, Whyte and Paules all agree that when customers interact with a service worker, every rule of etiquette goes out the window: workers can be interrupted, addressed with mouth full, ignored, stared at or subjected to unrestrained anger. Paules argues this refusal of considerate interaction strips service workers of “the status of a person”, reducing them to subhuman servants.⁴⁰

For black workers, this dehumanization enforces racial hierarchy. The performance of servitude “pervades every aspect of their [the waiters] work, pressuring them to internalize a negative perception of self and assume a corresponding posture of submission...”.⁴¹ Paules writes that by “...furnishing the waiter with the script, costume and backdrop of a servant, the restaurant encourages them to become absorbed in their role”. By doing this, management hopes to increase the “authenticity of the performance” by reducing the possibility the worker will break character and express emotions contrary to role they are expected to play.⁴² In a history of union organizing by waiters, also titled *Dishing It Out*, Dorothy Cobble how waiters learned to

³⁹ It is important to note that Paules conducted the research at a small diner, which contributes to the different conclusions than research at luxury establishments. Paules, *Dishing It out*, 1991, 34–35.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 138–140.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* Edited for gendered language.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 160.

alter their performance to match the desire of the customer, “To fulfill the emotional and fantasy needs of the male consumer, she [the waiter] quickly learns the all-too-common scripts: scolding wife, doting mother, sexy mistress or sweet, admiring daughter”.⁴³ The waiter becomes part of the consumption exchange, their performance consumed in just the same way as the food.⁴⁴ Hiring black workers, who already exist in a subservient position, allows a company to maximize the authenticity of the performance. In Wright’s autobiography, Shorty’s emotional labor, in suppressing his actual feelings toward whites when he puts on his degrading act, constructs a self that exists through the experiencing of power relations.

Sherman, a labor sociologist and former volunteer UNITE HERE organizer, takes a contemporary look at modern luxury hotels.⁴⁵ Sherman draws from ethnographic studies of domestic servant and employer interactions, arguing this relationship functions as “psychological exploitation” in which instead of profit, validation of customer of lifestyle and privilege is extracted from interactions with service workers.⁴⁶ Workers demonstrate deference and servility while guests enact entitlement to attention and labor—both are constantly performing class difference or “doing class”—and while Sherman does not point this out, for black workers, “doing race”.⁴⁷ This performance normalizes structural inequality. Because workers often tell stories of outrageous demands from entitled guests but rarely explicitly critique the structural inequality that allows guests to be so much wealthier than workers, Sherman defines “consent” as active investment in work. Workers who have some autonomy at work—such as waiters—become engaged with their work with the small choices and incentives. Michael Burawoy, an

⁴³ Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴⁵ Sherman, *Class Acts*, ix. UNITE HERE is the modern continuation of HERE.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 9–11.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 11–12.

industrial sociologist, first purposed this theory of consent at work in *Manufacturing Consent* in 1979. Burawoy studied factory workers who created a game out of their work and, drawing from Gramsci's quote that in the US, "hegemony here is born in the factory", argues that "consent is produced at the point of production".⁴⁸ Because the game workers created made them less tired and work faster, it generates consent to the structural order of a workplace.⁴⁹

Sherman applies this theory to service workers, explaining that the concept of consent allows us to think of workers using their agency to participate in work rather than refuse to participate. This framing is important in luxury establishments because of the increased expectation of emotional labor and requires taking seriously the reasons workers like their jobs.⁵⁰ For hotel workers, tipping becomes the game that Burawoy described, such as waiters betting on the size of tips and creating elaborate systems to cherry pick hopefully high tipping customers.⁵¹ As customers and workers interact in a hotel, they "produce themselves and each other as classed subjects" by "consenting to produce and consume luxury service". As the rules of the game solidify, this consent expands to include consent to the broader idea of inequality. It becomes acceptable for some people to receive more attention and labor and both workers and guests become comfortable on their side of the counter.⁵² Similar to "resistance", consent highlights

⁴⁸ Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), xii, Table of contents <http://www.gbv.de/dms/bowker/toc/9780226080383.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Burawoy also elaborates at what point this consent falls apart but the examples are so specific to factory labor it is not possible to apply them here. *Ibid.*, 85–97.

⁵⁰ Sherman, *Class Acts*, 16; For an excellent case study comparing casino workers in Las Vegas and South Africa and the role of race in shaping industry regulation, see Jeffrey J. Sallaz, *The Labor of Luck Casino Capitalism in the United States and South Africa*, 1 online resource (xviii, 326 pages) : illustrations vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), Ebook Library <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=922891>.

⁵¹ "Won His Bet," *Harper's Weekly*, March 25, 1905, 439; "By the Wayside," *The Real Estate Magezine*, July 1912, 63; "F. HOPKINSON SMITH LOVES TO GIVE TIPS: He Takes \$200 to Distribute When He Goes to Europe. TIP AND BE GLAD, SAYS HE The Author-Artist's Contribution to the Literature on a Burning Question -- Replies to Bok.," *New York Times*, May 28, 1905; Davis goes extensively into rules of the tipping "game". See Fred Davis, "The Cabdriver and His Fare: Facets of a Fleeting Relationship," *American Journal of Sociology* 65, no. 2 (September 1, 1959): 158–65.

⁵² Sherman, *Class Acts*, 262; Derber expands on this naturalization of attention and its relation to inequality, writing that the reputation of a luxury hotel or restaurant depends not only on food but on its "...capacity to deliver in

workers' agency and the potential for opposition to management.⁵³ Sherman argues that, through consent, the normalization of inequality operates as a worker strategy for casting themselves as powerful and not subordinate to customers, managers and coworkers. First, workers establish themselves as autonomous, skilled and in control of their work. Second, they cast themselves as superior, both to customers and coworkers, through comparisons and judgements. Third, workers develop meaningful relationships with guests to establish themselves as equal.⁵⁴ These strategies are complex and sometimes contradictory.

To Sherman, luxury is key: the worker's self is inherently implicated in the highly personalized, attentive and self-subordinating service luxury hotels provide. Sherman argues that interactive luxury services entail more than Hochschild's "emotional labor" because, in addition to providing physical labor and deference while lacking authority, hotel workers provide luxury service which guests interpret as "...care, akin to that provided by the idealized mother".⁵⁵ While mothers have power over children, hotel workers lack this power, at least explicitly. Guests, drawing on images of maternal care, interpret workers as exerting power over them—justifying in the minds of the guests their entitlement to recast all desires as needs,

delicately structured interactions the extra attention for which its affluent clientele is presumably deserving and able to pay for". The customer purchases "carefully cultivated face-to-face deference" and since such attention-giving is related to offering deference and respect, the interaction "symbolically affirms their [the privileged individual's] relative social worth". Charles. Derber, *The Pursuit of Attention: Power and Individualism in Everyday Life* (Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 1983), 67-69.

⁵³ Sherman, *Class Acts*, 16–17.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 17; Lamont explains in detail how service workers create alternative social hierarchies in which they place themselves above guests. When evaluating people above them in status, workers separate socioeconomic and moral worth by (1) "elaborating a detailed critique of the moral character of upper middle class people, mostly by pointing to their lack of personal integrity, lack of respect for others and the poor quality of their interpersonal relations" and (2) "adopting alternative definitions of success" in which they locate themselves above or equal to people with higher socioeconomic status. Dignity and self-worth are maintained by "developing alternative measuring sticks". See Michèle Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration* (New York, N.Y.: Russell Sage Foundation ;, 2000), 146-147.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 25–26; A 1922 Curtis Hotel pamphlet promises guests that they will "feel at home" in the hotel. See the Curtis Hotel, "Curtis Courtesies," *Curtis Events Weekly*, February 3, 1922, TX941.C87 C87, Minnesota Historical Society.

demand deference and be recognized in their individuality while not reciprocally recognizing that of workers.⁵⁶ However, white hotel guests do not interpret black workers as having power over them, limiting the applicability of this theory of an “idealized mother” for my research.⁵⁷ Rather than alienate the worker from them self, production-consumption relations in luxury hotels normalize class entitlements, leading both workers and guests to take them for granted. Sherman writes, “Catering to guests’ every need comes to seem reasonable to workers, just as having their needs catered to seems appropriate to guests”.⁵⁸ In Minneapolis, hotels become sites of production as the racial hierarchies between guests and customers inform this justification of entitlement.

Section 3: Service Workers and Race

In his autobiography *A Choice of Weapons*, black photographer and film director Gordon Parks describes working as a bellhop at the Minnesota Club in St. Paul starting in 1929. Influential men like Frank Kellogg and Jim Hill mingled at the Minnesota Club, smoking long cigars amid mahogany paneled libraries. Just as important to creating this atmosphere of elegance, Parks writes, was the hierarchy of “master and servant”. Sharply dressed in his uniform, Parks recalls that to most of these elite men, he was “invisible and unhearing, a sort of dark ectoplasm that only materialized when their fingers snapped for service”. His invisibility allowed Parks to listen to confidential conversations of financial deals, court decisions, marriage troubles, boats, politics and the stock market. Learning the mannerisms of the members, Parks

⁵⁶ Sherman, *Class Acts*, 47–48.

⁵⁷ The documentary *Booker’s Place* includes clips of white customers explaining how black workers seemed content with segregation because they always smiled. The interviewees were Klu Klux Klan member so it is difficult to decide if they truly convinced themselves the smiles were authentic. *Booker’s Place: A Mississippi Story* (Tribeca Film :, 2012).

⁵⁸ Sherman, *Class Acts*, 259–260.

perfectly timed the lighting of cigars for each member. Employment at the Minnesota Club gave Parks steady access to food, and equally important, Parks writes, books and newspapers stolen from the club library. One day, Pierce Butler complained to another member, “I’ll be damned if I can remember his name. He wrote *Arrowsmith*”. Before the other member could reply, Parks, invisible as always in the background, gulped and said, “Pardon, sir—if you don’t mind—it’s Sinclair Lewis”. Butler replied, “Lewis. Sinclair Lewis, that’s it”, and continued speaking, Parks thought, without ever realizing where the name had come from. But a few days later, Butler gave Parks a first edition cop of Edith Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence* in thanks.⁵⁹

To understand the highly complicated interactions between Parks and members of the Minnesota Club, I turn to Robin Kelley’s *Race Rebels*. The lives and struggles of these hotel workers encompass more than narrow, traditional definitions of labor disputes. By assuming workers’ struggles must be located within labor organizations, researchers assume that the only struggles that take place through institutions matter. Instead, researchers need to dig beneath the surface of institutions and organized social movements to examine “deep into the daily lives, cultures and communities which make the working classes so much more than people who work”.⁶⁰ Kelley draws from the theories of the anthropologist James C. Scott, who defines this “hidden transcript” of every day acts of resistance and survival as “infrapolitics” because, like infrared rays, they are beyond the visible end of the light spectrum.⁶¹ Personal narratives, like Parks’ autobiography, offer important insights into the experiences of black service workers excluded from traditional sources like newspapers or union archives as “illegitimate”.

⁵⁹ Gordon Parks, *A Choice of Weapons*, [1st ed.]. (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 48.

⁶⁰ Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press ;, 1994), 3–4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

While black hotel workers in Minneapolis did engage in struggle through the institutions of their unions, the political history of oppressed people cannot be understood without reference to infrapolitics, for these daily acts have a cumulative effect on power relations. Traditional labor history scholarship examines how people participate, merely asking whether or not a person was involved in a certain election or organization. By shifting the question to what motivated disenfranchised black working people to struggle and what strategies they developed, Kelley argues we can understand that their participation in “mainstream” politics, “...grew out of the very circumstances, experiences and memories that impelled many to steal from their employer, join a mutual benefit association or spit in a bus driver’s face...Politics is not separate from lived experiences or the imaginary world of what is possible; to the contrary, politics is about these things”.⁶² Parks’ experience of invisibility at his job clearly shaped how he viewed the world: writing thirty years after the events, Parks still recalls the crushing feeling of Pierce Butler apparent lack of acknowledgement of who had reminded him of Sinclair Lewis. Clear cut “political” motivations do not exist separately from everyday life. When the members of Local 614 and 665 decided to devote tremendous amounts of time and energy to organizing, they reshaped these movements to incorporate more of their concerns, transforming themselves in the process.

Resistance takes many forms: stealing silverware—or in Parks’ case, stealing books and newspapers—from the hotel, washing their own family’s clothes at work or scorching and spitting in food.⁶³ Kelley argues that the reason this resistance is ignored is because of its

⁶² Ibid., 9–10.

⁶³ Theft was so common Goins mentions it alongside proper appearance and tabling setting in his guide. See Goins, *The American Colored Waiter*, 91; For an excellent interview that discusses how workers rationalized theft at work, see Willie Ricks, Interview with Willie Ricks, interview by Carole Merritt, January 24, 2006, Voices Across the Color Line Oral History Collection, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

connection to racist stereotypes of the black working-class that defined theft, slowdowns, absenteeism or tool-breaking as demonstrative of blacks as inherently lazy or inept. Too often historians assume all black workers shared Protestant, middle-class values. By ignoring these everyday acts of resistance, we privilege the speeches and actions of elite black leadership.⁶⁴ The resulting conclusion from this appearance of silence is that the black working-class implicitly supported their own oppression. As Chapter 6 will discuss, this delegitimizing of certain forms of resistance also shapes who can and cannot be viewed as leaders. For example, Chumley recalls a waiter in Washington DC, who, resenting the fines for breaking cups, broke the handle off every cup in the hotel and left town. The hotel immediately ended its fine system.⁶⁵ Resistance by black workers often drew from white's racial mythology that saw blacks were "happy and content" and that any open, collective acts of defiance were inspired by outside, white agitators. The invisibility of black workers enabled infrapolitics. Black service workers learned to utilize their "invisibility" to attract tips, as demonstrated by Parks.⁶⁶ However, this invisibility required blacks to choke back natural reactions to blatant racism. Instead, Kelley points out that because work is alienating—we should expect black working people to minimize labor with as little economic loss as possible.⁶⁷

Kelley concludes by arguing infrapolitics and organized resistance must be examined jointly. For labor unions to successfully mobilize segments of the black working-class, they at least partially had to articulate the grievances, aspirations and dreams that remain hidden from public view.⁶⁸ For workers who might have otherwise expressed their grievances silently,

⁶⁴ Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 19–21.

⁶⁵ Rachleff et al., *Starving amidst Too Much*, 77.

⁶⁶ Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 21–22.

⁶⁸ While the 1938 citywide HERE contract does not cover workplace regulations specifically, it broadly defines the powers of its shop stewards in what appears to be an effort to address this abuse. Cooks, Waiters and Waitresses' Union Local 458 et al., "Contract," March 7, 1938, Curtis Hotel Records, Minnesota Historical Society.

involvement in a movement often is radicalizing. Unions play a role in shaping infrapolitics by aiding workers in revealing the vulnerability of their employers and potential strength in mutual struggle. The daily humiliations of racism, sexism and waged work, combined with the presence of a labor movement, embolden workers to take risks when the opportunity arises.⁶⁹ Johnson recalls in her oral history how Minneapolis Athletic Club members, so conditioned in their assumption of the passivity of invisible black service workers they would forget she was in the elevator car with them. After a club member hired a black worker, another member asked in the elevator car with Johnson, “‘How much did you get her for?’ Can you believe that? ‘How much you get her for?’ And he said, ‘I pay her less—these people don’t know any better’. And I just sat there thinking, you old fool, I do know better”.⁷⁰

Addressing a similar theme in a more modern setting, Biju Mathew examines New York cab drivers in *Taxi!*. Breaking from the tradition of Hochschild, Mathew draws from a Foucauldian analysis of biopower regimes. The non-white immigrant drivers express similar themes as the black waiters and porters previously discussed, which is why I decided to include it in this literature review. An interviewed taxi driver said of passengers, “‘What the fuck do they want us to do? I mean, how do they want me to behave? Docile, polite, meek, quiet... Should I bow, should I say yes sir, thank you sir, all right sir, each time I speak?’”.⁷¹ Mathew argues because service jobs are “exposed” and constantly publically visible, they create in workers a psychological state produced by sense of omnipresent threat. The constant anger and humiliation from customers disciplines non-white service workers to accept servility. Through this

⁶⁹ Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 33–34.

⁷⁰ Nellie Stone Johnson and David Brauer, *Nellie Stone Johnson: The Life of an Activist* (Saint Paul, Minn.: Ruminator Books, 2000), 76.

⁷¹ Biju Mathew, *Taxi!: Cabs and Capitalism in New York City* (New York: New Press, 2005), 84.

disciplining, the expectation of catering to the pleasures of whites is normalized.⁷² Mathew writes that this is a “...systematic strategy of labor control in which third world immigrants were meant to labor in a state of fear and to expect they would be treated very differently from the white middle-class”.⁷³ Regulatory attempts to “control” the taxi industry—a coded attempt to rein in worker resistance to the normalization of racial hierarchy—is motivated by a white desire to make New York “safe” for white middle-class suburbanites. A taxi driver explains their frustration, “Yeah...he [the mayor] wants me to shut the fuck up and behave, so that those kids don’t have to listen to shit from an immigrant driver”.⁷⁴

Section 4: “Tips and Servility Go Together”

In the early 1900s, as the luxury cars of the Pullman Company expanded across the country, Pullman stood in the mind of the public as the leading proponent of tipping. The spread of tipping, a new practice to the US, was blamed on the Pullman company and its porters. Pullman and other hospitality companies argued they should not have to pay employees wages—especially to former slaves—because those workers earned tips.⁷⁵ In 1915 federal Walsh Commission, appointed to investigate US workplace conditions, calculated Pullman would have to increase the wages of its 6,500 porters from \$27.50 a month to \$60 a month to maintain employee numbers if tipping was eliminated. In an editorial following the Walsh Commission’s hearing, the St. Louis *Republic* accused the Pullman Company of encouraging the tipping of its black porters as a means of overcoming resistance to “insulting” white workers with tips,

⁷² Ibid., 124–125.

⁷³ Ibid., 126.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 113.

⁷⁵ Sarumathi Jayaraman, *Forked: A New Standard for American Dining* (Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2016), 34–35, EBSCOhost
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1109704>.

writing, “It was the Pullman company which fastened the tipping habit on the American people and they used the negro as the instrument to do it”.⁷⁶ While the *Republic*’s editorial condemns the Pullman Company for its failure to pay a living wage, it also blames black porters, describing them as “ill-informed of the rights of workingmen and dependent by instinct”, arguing the Pullman Company “...used him [the porters], his pathetic history, his peculiar attitude toward the white man, for the accomplishment of its purpose”.⁷⁷ Over and over again, media presented a narrative that blames black workers for their over-representation in service jobs, promoting racist views that blacks were naturally subservient to whites—“his peculiar attitude toward the white man”—and that the history of slavery meant blacks made better servants and service workers—“his pathetic history”.

In many newspaper accounts, the outrage of tips was limiting to the tipping of white workers. In 1902, John Speed, writing for the *Lippincott’s Magazine*, draws a clear distinction between tipping black workers and white workers “I had never known any but negro servants. Negroes take tips, of course; one expects that of them—it is a token of their inferiority. But to give money to a white man was embarrassing to me. I feel defiled by his debasement and servility”. Speed goes on to blame workers for taking jobs that gave tips, writing that he did not “...comprehend now any native-born American could consent to take a tip. Tips go with servility, and no man who is a voter in this country by birthright is in the least justified in being in service”.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Janet Galligani. Casey and Janet Galligani. Casey, *The Novel and the American Left: Critical Essays on Depression-Era Fiction* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), 5, Table of contents <http://www.gbv.de/dms/goettingen/372218008.pdf>.

⁷⁷ William Rufus Scott, *The Itching Palm: A Study of the Habit of Tipping in America* (Penn publishing Company, 1916), 111–112.

⁷⁸ John Gilmer Speed, “Tips and Commissions,” *Lippincott’s Magazine*, June 1902.

In 1905, reporter Elizabeth Banks, in an article about white women working as waiters while attending college, wrote, “Mark the servility of the girl’s attitude and her meek and lowly ‘Yes, Sirs’ and ‘No, Sirs!’ Why should a college student...[address] any other man as a superior, say ‘Sir’ to him and accept his pity and tips?...She makes him her superior by kowtowing to him and accepting a tip”. Banks blames the students for not finding jobs that did not involve tipping, writing “they are selling not only their self-respect, but are throwing away their glorious birthright as American citizens and they certainly have not right to complain if they are looked down upon”. Banks concludes her article by blatantly linking tips and an expectation of servility, explaining that “I, good American as I consider myself, do look down upon certain persons as my inferiors, and those persons are the ones who accept tips from me, and I except and demand that they shall treat me as their superior”. Anyone who accepted a tip from her “is not my equal. From such persons I demand, ‘Yes, Ma’ams’ and a certain deference. Tips and servility go together”.⁷⁹ For Banks, the problem is that people who should not be her inferior—college educated white women—are taking tips.

Clyde Brion Davis, writing for *The Atlantic* in 1946, argues that “No man tips his equal...When you, an American citizen, present a tip to another American citizen, you are tacitly proclaiming, ‘I am a noble lord generously scattering largess to subhuman serfs’”.⁸⁰ His exaggerated statement about “noble lords” and “subhuman serfs” offers an unintentional insight at the role of tips in the construction of race. In an era of racialized tipping promoted by the Pullman Company, the idea that “tips and servility go together” becomes easier to swallow when the waiters were black. This, in turn, creates a vicious cycle, where the Curtis Hotel or

⁷⁹ Elizabeth Banks, “Tips Versus Social Equality and Self-Respect,” *New York Times*, June 11, 1905, sec. First Magazine.

⁸⁰ Clyde Brion Davis, “Tips,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1946.

Minneapolis Athletic Club, with their all-black wait staff trapped in the job by employment discrimination, normalized racial hierarchies by placing black workers in a position where they depended on tips and thus could be seen as inferior.

Labor unions for decades fought the tipping system.⁸¹ An organizer for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, which fought an unsuccessful legal battle against the Pullman Company's tip policy, explained porters' opposition to tips,

He [the porter] has come to understand that a firm and balanced manhood is incompatible with a dependence on public gratuities that tips carry with them a haunting and horrible sense of insecurity, to say nothing of the lack of dignity. Tips for the Negro as a reward for his labor bring back to the dim corners of his memory years of sorrow and bitterness spent in slavery; and they also tend to keep alive the fog of prejudice and ill feeling.⁸²

This juxtaposition between accepting tips and masculinity is the focus of Robert Hawkins chapter "Brotherhood Men and Singing Slackers" in *Reframing Randolph* and will be discussed further in Chapter 5.⁸³ In many media accounts, tipped employees were demonized and stigmatized by presenting them as making a lot of money or extracting some type of revenge on the low tipping public.⁸⁴ The *National Advocate*, a Minneapolis black newspapers, ridiculed organizing by the BSCP, writing that the porters "have no one to blame but themselves" for their low salaries because customers always tipped well.⁸⁵ The *Christian Recorder* adopted a similar narrative, writing that blacks "are not altogether blameless" for being trapped in low level

⁸¹ "Organized Labor Would Check Tipping System In All Trades," *United States Daily*, October 14, 1927, National Archives and Records Service Copies of Federal Documentation on Black Workers, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Cornell University Library.; Mary Barnett Gilson and Trainmen's Division, United Transport Service Employees of America, "Should Tips Be Included As Earnings in Determining Social Insurance Benefits?," *Bags & Baggage*, March 1941, v. 4, no. 3 edition, New York Public Library.

⁸² "Opposition of Organized Labor to the Tipping System," *Monthly Labor Review* 25, no. 4 (October 1, 1927): 4.

⁸³ Clarence Lang and Andrew E. Kersten, *Reframing Randolph: Labor, Black Freedom, and the Legacies of A. Philip Randolph* (NYU Press, 2015), 101, <http://nyupress.org/books/9780814785942/>.

⁸⁴ For examples, see C.G.M., "The Steward's Position," *The Hotel Monthly*, June 1889; "Won His Bet"; Dwight Macdonald, "Your Waiter Looks at You," *Harper's Magazine*, April 1941, <http://harpers.org/archive/1941/04/your-waiter-looks-at-you/>; "By the Wayside."

⁸⁵ "Pullman Porters Wait Like Horses in Paddock for Runs," *National Advocate*, May 4, 1923.

service jobs because “we too often find them playing the part of a lackey or monkey for the purpose of pleasing or currying favor”.⁸⁶ In a history of tipping, Segrave explained that “by infusing tip receivers—who were almost all in the low-income bracket—with mythical power and earnings, one did not have to deal with the realities of an underpaid, exploited group of employees”.⁸⁷

Senator Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina—a vocal white supremacist who openly bragged of leading lynch mobs—made headlines in the 1907 *New York Times* for tipping a black porter. Senator Tillman previously had vowed never to tip blacks, described by the *New York Times* as “He has his boots blackened...at the muzzle of a shotgun...What service the colored man does for him is actuated by fear and not by interest [in a tip]”. The practice of tipping was only just beginning to catch on in the US and receiving tips remained a sign of subservience. In an editorial, the *New York Times* argues Senator Tillman “...has not the slightest intention of raising the colored tip-taker to the Caucasian level by declining to undermine his civic equality with quarters. On the contrary, his constant contention is that the colored man is an inferior who must be kept in his place, if it takes all the loose change in the possession of the white man”.⁸⁸ For white Minnesotans, their loose change made real the hierarchy between the untipped, white “self-supporting American” and naturally inferior tipped black service workers.

⁸⁶ “Our Exchanges,” *Christian Recorder*, September 17, 1885.

⁸⁷ Kerry Segrave, *Tipping: An American Social History of Gratuities* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1998), 11.

⁸⁸ Special to The *New York Times*, “TILLMAN GIVES NEGRO A TIP.: Senator Breaks His Rule to Favor a Omaha Hotel Porter.,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1907; “Tillman’s Tip,” *New York Times*, August 11, 1907.

Section 5: Service Work and the Legacy of Slavery

For blacks, service work and the legacy slavery are closely intertwined. Writing in 1920 in *Darkwater*, W. E. B. Du Bois traces the problems of service workers to the persistence of social relations that originated during slavery. “Upon such spiritual myths” that blacks are naturally servants “the anachronism of American slavery [was] built”.⁸⁹ Du Bois argued that the way to climb “out of slavery into citizenship” lay “in escape from menial serfdom”, writing that reducing the percentage of blacks who worked as servants and serfs “is the measure of our rise”.⁹⁰ Describing them as “upper servants”, Du Bois writes that positions such as “hotel waiters, Pullman porters, janitors and cooks...could have called on the great labor movement to lift their work out of slavery” had they been white. Instead, “the labor movement turned their backs on those black men when the white world dinned in their ears” the racist stereotype “Negroes are servants, servants are Negroes” and naturally belong in the servant caste.⁹¹ As white service workers attempt to distance themselves from narratives of slavery, labor unions, Du Bois argues, are “designed, not simply to raise wages, but to guard against any likeness between artisan and servant. There is no essential difference in ability and training between a subway guard and a Pullman porter, but between their union cards lies a whole world”.⁹²

Pullman did little to deny this accusation: in response to the 1915 Walsh Commission, a company executive explained that southern blacks were more suited to the work of a porter than northern blacks because “the southern negro is more pleasing to the traveling public. He is more adapted to wait on people and serve with a smile”.⁹³ Arthur Brisbane, in a 1934 letter to *Hotel*

⁸⁹ Beth Tompkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 27; W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater; Voices from within the Veil*. (New York,: AMS Press, 1969), 113.

⁹⁰ Du Bois, *Darkwater; Voices from within the Veil*., 114–115.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 115; Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945*, 27.

⁹² Du Bois, *Darkwater; Voices from within the Veil*., 119.

⁹³ Capitalization original. Segrave, *Tipping*, 17.

Monthly titled “A Tribute to Pullman Porters” praised the seemingly natural fit of blacks to service work, writing the, “...invaluable colored Pullman porters, never tired or made impatient by constant travel, attentive to duty, grateful for kindness...The Pullman car is made for the colored man, just as the Artic Circle is made for the Eskimo”.⁹⁴ This view extended beyond the train car. In a 1932 dissertation titled *The Negro Family in Chicago* E. Franklin Frazier wrote:

Negro men had acquired the traditional right to be waiters in hotels, restaurants and on trains. They were regarded as the rightful holders of positions as butlers and coachmen for the wealthy. The Negro footman and houseman were expected positions around the mansions of the moneyed class.⁹⁵

Just as slavery was seen as natural, the legacy of that ideology was the reason blacks were seen as “rightful holders” of service jobs—a sentiment so strong it could be compared to the existence of the Artic.

Much of the literature written about BSCP focuses on how the lingering legacy of slavery informed the experiences of black service workers.⁹⁶ David Perata, drawing from oral histories in his book *Those Pullman Blues*, explains that for many blacks, becoming a porter was “simply a transfer from the plantation to the railroad”.⁹⁷ Capitalizing on folkloric images of the “maternal Negro mammy” and the “docile black servant”, the Pullman Company established the porter as an extension of plantation hospitality. For the price of a train ticket, the common white man could be waited upon in the grand manner of the privileged southern gentry. Perata writes that white willingness to preserve antebellum attitudes provided a ready market for the Pullman

⁹⁴ Arthur Brisbane, “A Tribute to the Pullman Porter,” *Hotel Monthly* 42, no. 493 (April 1934): 67.

⁹⁵ Quoted by St. Clair Drake and Horace R Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 232.

⁹⁶ The Pullman Company also employed several hundred Filipino porters. These Filipino workers occupied a complicated place in the Pullman racial hierarchy: originally hired to threaten the all-black BSCP, Pullman allowed Filipino porters to handle money— prohibited for blacks—but subjected them to same intense surveillance as blacks. See Barbara M. Posadas, “The Hierarchy of Color and Psychological Adjustment in an Industrial Environment,” *Labor History* 23, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 349.

⁹⁷ David D. Perata, *Those Pullman Blues: An Oral History of the African American Railroad Attendant*, Twayne’s Oral History Series ; No. 22; Twayne’s Oral History Series ; No. 22. (New York: Twayne Publishers ;, 1996), xvii.

Company and cemented in the public's mind the connection between "white tablecloths, fine china, sparkling silver and black servants" by spreading this narrative of "plantation hospitality".⁹⁸ Appealing to these attitudes, many luxury hotels in northern cities in the late 1800s made it a policy to hire only black men. During this era, blackface minstrel shows developed, allowing an individual to watch a blackface show and then stroll down the street for a meal served by black men. Daniel Wilk labelled this white desire for black service workers a "slavery fantasy".⁹⁹ In northern cities, without the southern history of slavery, hotels with black staff acted as sites of race production. Just as attending a minstrel show could solidify one's whiteness, so could the act of being served by black waiters.¹⁰⁰

In *Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle*, Santino argues the concept of slavery informs the porters' ideas about their jobs because, "...in a more figurative sense, they were economic 'slaves' to the Pullman Company, paid lower wages than whites for comparable work and forced (in part by the tipping system) to act like slaves to their passengers".¹⁰¹ Santino draws from anthropologist Ralph Linton to define status as a "collection of rights and duties". In service jobs, these duties must be constantly emphasized so that attention is called to their performance—the flight attendant fluffing a passenger's pillow or the hotel worker carrying the customer's bags. For porters, in order to perform and project the role of a humble black servant, the porter must not be seen as having equal rights as the customer.¹⁰² Passengers can take

⁹⁸ Ibid., xviii; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 18.

⁹⁹ Daniel Levinson Wilk, "Paula Deen's Racist Wedding Fantasy Was Once Reality," *Bloomberg View*, June 25, 2013, <http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2013-06-25/paula-deen-s-racist-wedding-fantasy-was-once-reality>.

¹⁰⁰ For a more detailed explanation of the role of minstrel shows in defining whiteness, see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London; New York: Verso, 1991).

¹⁰¹ Jack. Santino, *Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: Stories of Black Pullman Porters*, Publications of the American Folklore Society. New Series; Publications of the American Folklore Society. New Series (Unnumbered) (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 10.

¹⁰² Ibid., 19.

liberties with porters, which Santino argues “...by doing so go out of their way to remind them [the porters] of, and to reinforce, their subordinate status”.¹⁰³ Dependent on tips, the porter must willingly subject themselves to rude, insensitive and humiliating customers—a theme also discussed by Paules and Josephson earlier in this chapter. Santino argues that for black workers, “Tipping is part of a complex web of associations that has at its center the institution of slavery...The line between selling oneself and maximizing tips—that is, between slavery and economic freedom—was very thin”.¹⁰⁴ Silently suffering but collecting a tip is the only available response for a porter in a hierarchical power structure in which the customer was not only always right, they were rich and white.¹⁰⁵ The impact on the workers can only be imagined. The parents of Abe Snadon, a founding member of Local 614, were slaves. Even after moving north to Minnesota, Snadon found himself working at a hotel, spending his days performing plantation culture to fulfill the slavery fantasy of white customers.¹⁰⁶ Many of the older migrant hotel workers likely found themselves in similar situations, fulling understanding what the hotels were trying to do by employing them.

At the same time, the expectations of servility attached to particular jobs could create uneasy alliances between black workers and white employers who sought to redraw workplace colors lines to meet both groups’ needs. Similar to waiters and porters, employers expected chauffeurs to provide services beyond driving, a practice that reinforced servility, “People want them [the chauffeurs] not only to be a servant but to know that they are a servant”.¹⁰⁷ As white

¹⁰³ Ibid., 107.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 94–95.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 104.

¹⁰⁶ Abe Snadon’s death certificate mentions his parents were slaves. Minnesota. Certificate of Death No. 16908 (July 29, 1958), Abe Snadon. Minnesota Department of Health, Section of Vital Statistics. Uncertified copy in possession of author.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Cassanello and Melanie Shell-Weiss, *Florida’s Working-Class Past: Current Perspectives on Labor, Race, and Gender from Spanish Florida to the New Immigration* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 148. Edited for gendered language.

chauffeurs continued to prevent blacks from driving in Miami, C. L. Sheeler, a white resident of a Miami suburb, wrote into the newspaper, criticizing the white chauffeurs. Sheeler argued black chauffeurs were willing to work for less than whites and were biologically suited to service. “The negro is a servant, by nature a humble and obedient servant, and a faithful one”. Who were the white chauffeurs to challenge preference for such labor? Some of these employers, Sheeler continued, “...have a nigger mammy cooking their dinners, nigger girls serving the guests at the table and a nigger nurse taking care of their children...Then somebody wants to howl about a black man driving his celebrated Ford car on the streets of Miami, and down Dixie Highway”.¹⁰⁸ For white chauffeurs, violently maintaining the ban on black drivers in Miami was an act of resistance to their wealthy employers’ desire to make them act in more servile ways.¹⁰⁹ In the end, views like Sheeler won. The socially condescending and racist view that blacks belonged in service jobs enabled blacks to enter chauffeuring despite continued violence by white drivers.

Section 6: Black Workers as Display of Luxury

The commitment of the luxury hotel to satisfy the conspicuous displays of wealth favored by its clientele extended beyond the menu and the food. Every aspect of service, including the race of the waiters, was part of the experience designed by the hotel and performed by its waiters. In these hotels, the aristocratic dining experience began at the front door. At the famous West Hotel in Minneapolis, guests were greeted by a doorman “resplendent in his tall hat and braid-trimmed uniform” who escorted them to the dining room.¹¹⁰ Once seated, a waiter, dressed

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 152–153.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 148.

¹¹⁰ Loring M. Staples, *High Society, Murder and Politics in Minneapolis “Lost” Hotels* (Minneapolis: Carlson Printing Company, 1979), 60.

and drilled like a military unit, arrived with a menu.¹¹¹ Although the uniform varied across establishments, a typical uniform consisted of black pants, polished shoes, vest, bow tie and a white or black jacket depending on the time of day.¹¹² The waiter's appearance was an integral part of the restaurant's atmosphere. The Curtis Hotel's *Dining Room Service Manual for Ushers, Waiters, Busboys* instructed workers to be "careful with their appearance", recommending a daily bath and forbidding waiters from wiping sweat from their face in the presence of customers.¹¹³ One guide even warned waiters "to avoid having your face come in too close contact with your guests, as your breath may be offensive".¹¹⁴ Another suggested that for waiters, "personal neatness should be his watchword".¹¹⁵ The uniform, their race and heavily policed appearances of the waiter were all the visible aspects of the labor that signified luxury.

Most critically, the luxury of a hotel depended on the emotional labor of its waiters. In a letter, the Curtis Hotel restaurant manager R. Melony summarized the role of the dining room captain as "the captain serves the food with great ceremony and showmanship...part waiter, part diplomat and part showman".¹¹⁶ Under "W" for waiter, Janet Lefler's *The ABC's of Courtesy for Hotels and Restaurants* explains, "Your [the waiter's] attentive welcome, your subtle selling, your unobtrusive watchfulness, your prompt service and your genuine gratitude (no matter what the amount!) mark you as the perfect host...Be as gracious as though he were a guest in your

¹¹¹ Campbell, *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers' Guide.*; Winfield Forrest Cozart, *A Technical Treatise on Dining-Room Service; the Waiters' Manual*, (Chicago,: The Hotel world [etc.], 1898); Many of the guides, particularly those aimed at black workers, adopted a narrative of racial uplift, declaring workers could "glorify and dignify" their work by excelling at it. For an example, see the praise for Booker T. Washington in James R Morton, "Information for Southern Negro Hotel Employees, Restaurant Employees Domestic Employees and Owners" (Southern Negro Service Association, undated), Sc Mirco R-1182, Schomburg Center for Black Culture.

¹¹² Goins, *The American Colored Waiter*, 1; Andrew Peter. Haley, "Turning the Tables: American Restaurant Culture and the Rise of the Middle Class, 1880-1920" 2005, 50.

¹¹³ Curtis Hotel, *Dining Room Service Manual for Ushers, Waiters, Busboys*, 1947, 2-3.

¹¹⁴ Cozart, *A Technical Treatise on Dining-Room Service; the Waiters' Manual*, 15.

¹¹⁵ Goins, *The American Colored Waiter*, 15-16.

¹¹⁶ R Melony to Lloyd MacAloon, November 19, 1947, Lloyd M. MacAloon's Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.

own home”.¹¹⁷ The idea of “genuine gratitude” returns to Hochschild’s concept of deep acting, where workers must actually feeling what one is supposed to be displaying—in this case, servitude. A 1937 arbitration filing by HERE Local 30 and Local 48 in San Francisco explained waiters were forced to a constant manner of “refinement, skills, deftness and delicacy”, going as far as even carrying the food with an “air of luxury and richness”. Each customers required a personal touch by the waiter.¹¹⁸ Like Gordon Parks lighting the cigarettes, an expert waiter could even “anticipate the wants of the guests”.¹¹⁹ Two ex-porters wrote in 1948 that the “porter caters first to your mental comfort. He massages your ego, flatters your vanity, helps you enjoy your trip...Most porters would be out of work if they didn’t add applied psychology to their job of running errands”.¹²⁰ While less visible than a uniform or the waiter’s race, the expectation of performative emotional labor was also an important part of constructing luxury. From the “richness” of how food was carried to the utilization of guests’ slavery fantasies, every decision by the hotel emphasized the luxury guests could expect.

Even the education of the waiter was used by the Pullman Company and Minneapolis hotels to emphasize the luxurious service customers could expect. These workers, although perceived as inferior by passengers, must also, in their own way, “...be as elegant as the cars they rode and the passengers they served”.¹²¹ Drawing from the well-established stereotype of well-heeled black servants, the men hired as porters were chosen to conform to this image and

¹¹⁷ Janet Lefler, *The ABC’s of Courtesy for Hotels and Restaurants* (New York: Ahrens Pub. Co., 1957), 38.

¹¹⁸ Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union Local 30 and Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union Local 48, “Basic Wage Schedule,” 1937, 234–250, Contracts and Arbitration Records MS 458A Box 1, Folder 2, North Baker Research Library, California Historical Society.

¹¹⁹ Campbell, *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers’ Guide.*, 59.

¹²⁰ Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945*, 22.

¹²¹ Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945*, 22; For a more detailed explanation of how the Pullman Company constructed this image, see Janice L. Reiff and Susan E. Hirsch, “Pullman and Its Public: Image and Aim in Making and Interpreting History,” *The Public Historian* 11, no. 4 (October 1, 1989): 101–102, doi:10.2307/3378069.

thus the racism that trapped highly educated blacks in these jobs simultaneously helped to create the work force to populate the position of the dignified, trustworthy black servant.¹²² Sherman writes that luxury hotels draw both on the racialized, gendered domestic servant tropes of this educated, skilled, unobtrusive butler performing personal and household services and the maternal female servant of color who does the housework and childcare. Deference, willingness to serve and needs anticipation are implicit in the work of both servant tropes.¹²³ Cassius, in his oral history, explained the Minneapolis Athletic Club “always prided itself in saying they had the most intelligent blacks in America working there”. Eager to retain its highly educated workforce—in part to maintain the tropes of elegant, educated black servants—the Minneapolis Athletic Club quickly caved to the demands of Local 665.¹²⁴ Both the performance by black workers of an aura of dignity and willing—even eager—subservience and the visible blackness of the worker constructed the luxurious ambiance of Pullman cars and hotels. This returns to Section 2’s discussion of Rachel Sherman and Michael Burawoy’s idea of “consent at work” as important to luxury. For hotel waiters, it was not enough to merely show up and do the assigned tasks. Workers needed to be actively invested in their performance of servility to complete the authenticity of racialized luxury.

Some black workers did internalize this performance, falling into Hochschild’s dilemma in Section 2 of becoming alienated from their own emotional labor. E. A. Macconnon, a black headwaiter, published in 1904 a book of biographies of famous headwaiters to inspire a younger generation to aspire to wait tables. In the introduction, he argues more hotels should employ black waiters:

¹²² Santino, *Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle*, 117.

¹²³ Sherman, *Class Acts*, 47.

¹²⁴ Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, 24.

The patrons in the majority of cases, prefer colored waiters...many hotel proprietors and managers who were deluded with the idea that colored waiters could not fit in nicely into the royal splendor of the general surroundings... There is, however, a very strong and general belief that many of these men have realized the fallacy of the idea, and have discovered that the *intelligent polished piece of ebony is just the thing needed* to give force of contrast to the marble guests, and at the same time properly distinguish the servitor from those he serves, and gives the exquisite and artistic variety of color-blending to the splendor of the surroundings in the dining room.¹²⁵

The slow decline of all-black wait staff referenced by Macconnon will be discussed in more length in Chapter 3. To hotel managers, white customers and even some waiters like Macconnon, black waiters became merely objects—an “intelligent polished piece of ebony”—that would emphasize the “royal splendor” of the luxury hotel. Fully dehumanized, the waiters existed only to add a splash of color to the white customer’s dining experience. Informed by white nostalgia for slavery, the race of their waiters acted to “distinguish the servitor from those he serves” and reinforce a racial hierarchy.

The connection between the employment of black waiters and luxury is visible in visual materials produced by Minnesota hotels. Menus from three Minneapolis hotels, the West Hotel, Hotel Nicollet and Hotel Lafayette, all include numerous items in French—whether the food was French or not, such as the Lafayette’s “California Pears en Compote”—to hint at the aristocratic roots of the luxury hotel experience.¹²⁶ Figure 2 is a caricature of a black waiter, placed opposite the West Hotel menu’s listing of food.

¹²⁵ Emphasis added. E. A. Maccannon, *Commanders of the Dining Room; Biographic Sketches and Portraits of Successful Head Waiters* (New York, Gwendolyn Pub. Co., 1904), 11, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gdc/scd0001.00020209550>.

¹²⁶ Haley, “Turning the Tables,” 46; This obsession with French imitation even included the wall decorations. See Curtis L. Carlson, “A History of the Radisson Hotel” (Carlson Companies, Inc., 1996), Minnesota Historical Society; Unfortunately, the Hennepin Library collection only includes these three menus. Due to how early they are compared to my focus on the 1930s and 1940s, I declined to do a more substantial analysis. Hotel Lafayette, “Hotel Lafayette Menu,” 1893, Hennepin County Library, James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library; Hotel Nicollet, “Hotel Nicollet Menu,” 1897, Hennepin County Library, James K. Hosmer Special Collections; West Hotel, “West Hotel Menu,” 1884, Hennepin County Library, James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library.



Figure 2: West Hotel menu, 1884, Hennepin County Library Special Collections

The waiter is looking up, locating him below the guest, echoing a master and slave hierarchy and reinforcing who is expected to serve and who is expected to be served at this hotel. Holding the tray softly and walking delicately, this image is the idealized invisible black servant. His softened facial expressions return to the earlier discussion of emotional labor: this waiter is performing a happiness or eagerness to serve, reassuring guests of the naturalness of his servility. Elaborated on in Chapter 3, southern slave-owners on vacation in Minneapolis brought slaves to Minnesota hotels in the early 1860s, just twenty years before this menu was published.

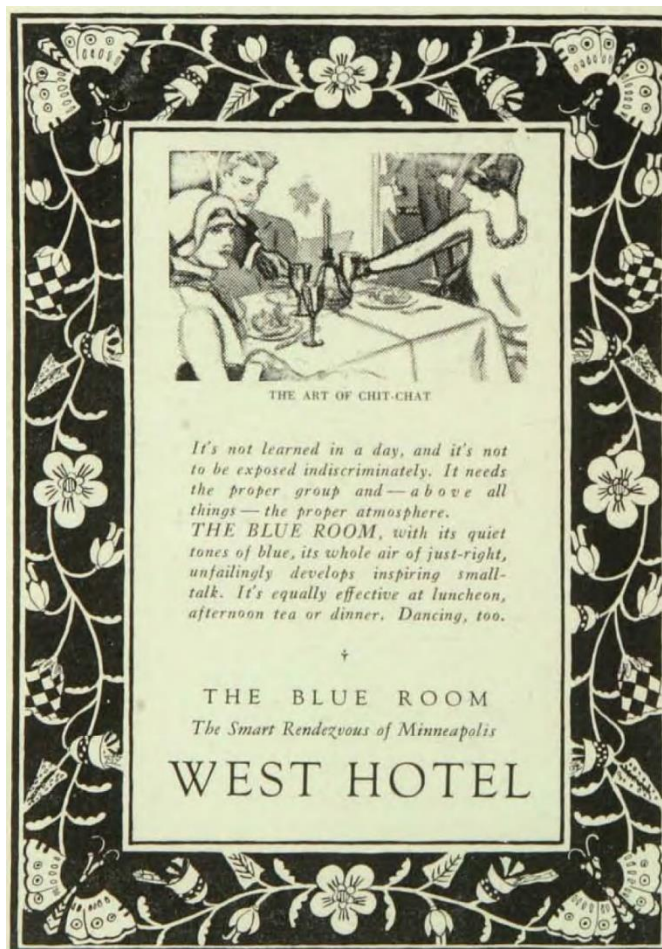


Figure 3: West Hotel ad, published in the *Minnesota Alumni Weekly*, 1927

Figure 3, an ad for the West Hotel from 1927 published in the University of Minnesota's alumni magazine, includes the subtle arm of a black waiter reaching between two customers.¹²⁷ The customers do not need to acknowledge their waiter because of how expertly their needs are anticipated. Unobtrusive and invisible—like all good waiters—the hand serves to further emphasize the luxury of the “Blue Room” to potential customers by tapping into a slavery fantasy. The text of the ad references the importance of the “proper atmosphere”, which through the inclusion of the waiter's hand, must include black service workers.

¹²⁷ University of Minnesota Alumni Association, “[West Hotel Ad],” *Minnesota Alumni Weekly*, November 19, 1927, Retrieved from the University of Minnesota's Digital Conservancy.

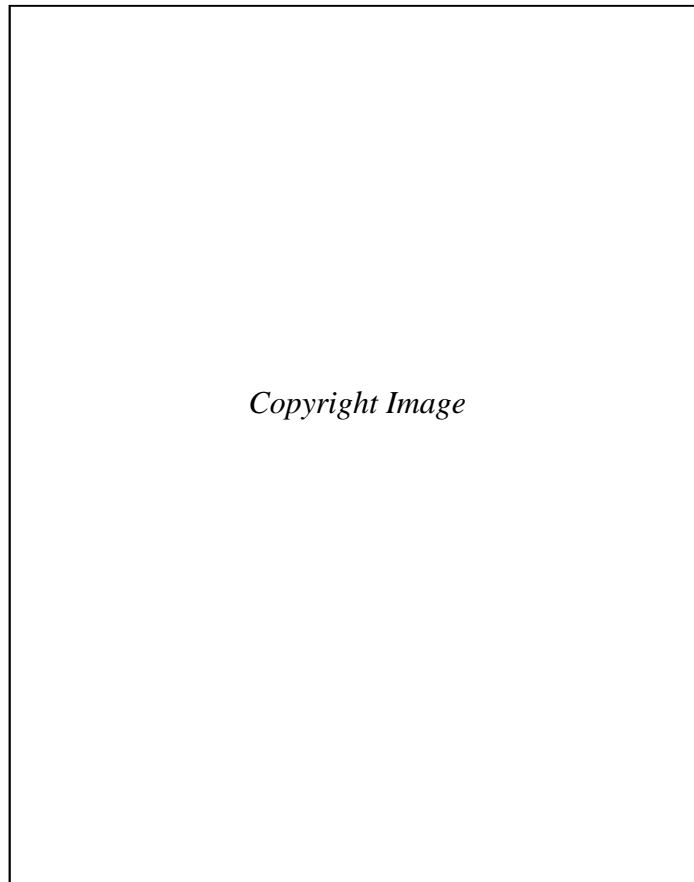


Figure 4: Hotel Monthly, 1933

Similarly, Figure 4, from a 1933 article in the journal *Hotel Monthly*, again shows white customers being served by smiling black men in impeccable uniforms.¹²⁸ As historian Myra Armstead points out, the majority of the visual record shows blacks serving whites, confirming the preferred racial order. The racial trope of black servant informed the desires of white customers and the hiring decisions of white employers for black service workers.¹²⁹ Even as black waiters disappeared from hotel dining rooms, they began to appear on food packaging such

¹²⁸ The image is copyrighted. Please see a print copy at the East Side Freedom Library for the image. Pfaelzev Brothers, "The Christmas Rush," *Hotel Monthly* 41, no. 489 (December 1933): 85.

¹²⁹ I was unable to locate any photographs of black hotel workers in Minneapolis. "Revisiting Hotels and Other Lodgings: American Tourist Spaces through the Lens of Black Pleasure-Travelers, 1880-1950," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 25 (2005): 142.

as Aunt Jemima's Syrup or Uncle Ben's Rice, continuing to evoke a racist nostalgia for slavery. Wilk points to Paula Deen's black waiter fantasy as a modern popular culture example.¹³⁰

The Curtis Hotel's employee guide instructed waiters to serve guests "noiselessly" and clear dishes without any "unnecessary noise" to avoid disturbing customers.¹³¹ In *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America*, Beth Tompkins Bates writes that "Porters wore two faces...[as a] protective mechanism that shielded them from the charge of stepping out of place—the place assigned by the white world—or being 'uppity'".¹³² Bernard Mergen argues the porter's performance resembled that of the black minstrel actor who wears a mask on stage not protect just their self-esteem, but also to shield the actor from revealing their true feelings toward the audience, allowing the porter and actor to both find work and as a defense against violence. Mergen quotes BSCP organizer Benjamin McLaurin, "the porters actually carried two faces...because, after all, the Negro has to try and survive and he might say one thing to you and mean something altogether different".¹³³ Whites found it more comfortable to have blacks wait on them because of the social distance racial hierarchies created made the servile black worker seem less intrusive and more "impersonal" than a white worker.¹³⁴ That comfort of the passenger was linked to seeing porters—black men—to servants. Perata writes, "For example, many women thought nothing of undressing in front of the porter, almost as if he

¹³⁰ Wilk, "Paula Deen's Racist Wedding Fantasy Was Once Reality"; Several artists have responded to historic caricatures by reclaiming and subverting the images. For examples, see Maurice Berger et al., *Fred Wilson: Objects and Installations 1979-2000*, Issues in Cultural Theory ; 4; Issues in Cultural Theory ; 4. (Baltimore, Md.: Center for Art and Visual Culture, University of Maryland Baltimore County ;, 2001); Jane H. Carpenter and Betye. Saar, *Betye Saar*, Pomegranate Catalog ; No. A656; The David C. Driskell Series of African American Art ; v. 2; Pomegranate Catalog ; No. A656.; The David C. Driskell Series of African American Art ; v. 2. (San Francisco, Calif.: Pomegranate, 2003), Table of contents <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/fy043/2003042972.html>.

¹³¹ Curtis Hotel, *Dining Room Service Manual for Ushers, Waiters, Busboys*, 11.

¹³² Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945*, 19.

¹³³ Bernard Mergen, "The Pullman Porter: From 'George' to Brotherhood," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (Spring 1974): 234–235.

¹³⁴ Brailsford Reese Brazeal, *The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters: Its Origin and Development* (Harper & brothers, 1946), 1; Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945*, 22; Perata, *Those Pullman Blues*, xix.

was invisible”.¹³⁵ The visibility afforded white service workers, Bates writes, “...makes it hard to imagine a white woman undressing in front of a white hotel bellhop”.

Returning to Macconnon, in Minnesota, far from the plantations of the south, an “intelligent polished piece of ebony is just the thing needed” to recreate plantation culture, transforming the hotel into a site of race production. Macconnon concludes the introduction in his guide for waiters by writing, “No correct history of the American hotel business could be written with the negro waiter left out”.¹³⁶ Over a hundred years later, this statement remains true. The scholarly neglect of black service workers in labor history is a substantial gap in the literature. As this research demonstrates, understanding union organizing by hotel workers in Minnesota requires examining the connection between luxury hotels, the employment of black workers and the legacy of slavery.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the daily experience of black hotel workers in Minneapolis was not defined by strikes or even union organizing—it was the constant struggle of maintaining selfhood and agency amidst a grueling performance of servility and resistance to racial hierarchies. In this chapter, I surveyed existing literature on service workers and race, laying out how Local 614 and Local 665 fit into this scholarly conversation. In Section 1, Josephson argues hotel workers serve “two bosses” because workers can’t talk back to customers or bosses. Hotels actively created hierarchies between worker and customers with fines and regulations. Whyte elaborates on this “continual subordination” of service workers, with black workers at the

¹³⁵ Perata, *Those Pullman Blues*, xix.

¹³⁶ Maccannon, *Commanders of the Dining Room; Biographic Sketches and Portraits of Successful Head Waiters*, 11. Punctuation original.

bottom. With most labor history focusing on industrial workers—far removed from customer interactions—this triangular relationship is an important component to keep mind, even if Whyte and Josephson largely neglect race in their analysis. In Section 2, Hochschild explains service workers must manage their own feelings to create a certain state of mind in the customer, labelling this “emotional labor”. Service workers must perform servility for customers to create this state of mind. Workers demonstrate deference and servility while guests enact entitlement to attention and labor—both are constantly “doing class”, as Sherman puts it. Because of the nature of work in luxurious hotels, though, workers had to be actively invested in their job.

In Section 3 I turn to Kelley, who argues for an expansion of the idea of labor disputes to incorporate infrapolitics. Local 614 and Local 665 highlights the diversity of these tactics, varying from stealing silverware to utilizing the assumed invisibility to learn customer mannerisms to earn better tips. Mathew explains service jobs are “exposed” and constantly publically visible, they create in workers a psychological state produced by sense of omnipresent threat. Section 4 looks at how “tips and servility go together”, which served to reinforce the presumed naturalness of black servitude and keep wages low. Section 5 examines the connections between black service workers and slavery as racialized interactions were shifted from the plantation to the hotel lobby, a connection made literal in Minnesota by vacationing slave-owners in the 1860s. In Minneapolis, hotels with black staff acted as sites of race production. Just as attending a minstrel show could solidify one’s whiteness, so could the act of being served by black waiters. This “slavery fantasy” by white customers both trapped Local 614 and Local 665 in certain job categories yet ensured their continued employment. Section 6 concludes by explaining how black workers were “displayed” in advertisement, menus and physically in the dining room of Minneapolis hotels to symbolize luxury.

A 1927 advertisement by the Curtis Hotel describes the hotel as a “portal” that offers to guests the “fulfillment of their own wishes”.¹³⁷ For guests, fulfillment of those wishes required black service workers, who were expected to act out the style of servility that had been shaped under slavery. Minnesota was geographically far removed from the plantations of the south. Hotels, however, could function as a “portal” to recreate southern gentile culture, with the slavery fantasy embedded in this nostalgic desire remaining an attractive marketing method to emphasize the luxurious atmosphere. Overall, the hotel waiter is part of the consumption exchange that occurred in Minneapolis hotel dining rooms. Just as customers ate food, they consumed the performance of servility by black waiters, making real the performance through constant repetition. The literature examined in this chapter gives an insight into how the performance by black workers of an aura of dignity and subservience and the visible blackness of the worker were instrumental in Minneapolis in both displaying a hotel’s luxurious ambiance and in the role of hotels as sites of racial production.

¹³⁷ Curtis Hotel, “The Curtis Hotel, Minneapolis, Minnesota,” 1927, Minnesota Historical Society.

Chapter 3.

Blacks in Minnesota

In 1948, Matthew Little flipped a coin—heads for Minneapolis, tails for Denver. The coin came up heads and Little left North Carolina for Minneapolis. Arriving in February, the city was less than welcoming to a black migrant. Little wandered for four days in downtown, recalling, “I felt so out of place because I didn’t see another black person those whole four days”.¹ Finally, a police officer directed Little to the Dreamland Café, owned by Anthony Cassius. Little had found the Minneapolis’ south side African American community, a small group of businesses and homes clustered along 4th Avenue, south of Lake Street.² Little soon found a job waiting tables at the Curtis Hotel.³ Unable to find a job where he could use his college degree, Little quickly realized that moving north had not provided an escape from racism, only made it more elusive. In the South, jobs were clearly segregated, with the separation of jobs for blacks and jobs for whites distinct and ironclad. In Minnesota, Little describes, “One could apply for any job, but getting hired was another matter”.⁴ These unwritten rules surprised Little. “Minnesota was supposed to be a place where this kind of Jim Crow discrimination did not exist,” said Titilayo Bediako, his daughter. Determined to change this, Little joined the chapter Minneapolis of the National Association for the Advancement of

¹ Jerry Abraham, *Voices from Minnesota: Short Biographies from Thirty-Two Senior Citizens* (Elk River, MN: DeForest Press, 2004), 207.

² Kirsten Delegard, “Minneapolis in 1948: ”Where in the Heck Do Black People Live around Here?,” *The Historyapolis Project*, January 28, 2014, <http://historyapolis.com/minneapolis-in-1948-where-in-the-heck-do-black-people-live-around-here/>.

³ Minneapolis hotels were closed shop after 1944, making it likely Little was a member of Local 458, which Local 614 had merged with in 1947. “Closed-Shop Raise for Hotel Unions,” *Minneapolis Labor Review*, January 6, 1944.

⁴ Abraham, *Voices from Minnesota: Short Biographies from Thirty-Two Senior Citizens*, 208.

Colored People (NAACP), eventually becoming its long-time president and playing a pivotal role in many civil rights struggles in Minnesota.⁵

As Minnesotan historian Jennifer Delton writes in her dissertation, historians neglect marginalized experiences when the number of people is small. Minnesotan historians often merely fit black experiences into their white progressive narratives of the state. In this conventional narrative, the civil rights movement began with the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* and culminates in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a story of tragedy but ultimate triumph. As Thomas Sugrue argues in his book *Sweet Land of Liberty*, this narrative reduces the civil rights movement to a call to conscience, which through these activists' heroism and uncompromising faith, "cleansed America of its sins" and restored the American Creed, a belief in fundamental equality and humanity supposedly enshrined in our nation's founding documents.⁶ The well-publicized history of racist atrocities in the South enables white northerners to ignore their own role in maintaining white supremacy in the US. In his 1944 bestseller, *An American Dilemma*, Gunnar Myrdal remarks on this pervasive sense of northern racial "innocence": "It is convenient for Northerners' good conscience to forget about the Negro".⁷ Despite that the North has been home to millions of blacks for generations, Northern blacks loom in the shadows, absent from the historical stage until the 1960s when they serve as spoilers, rioting and sparking white backlash to the civil rights movement.⁸

⁵ Randy Furst, "Matthew Little Stood up for Civil Rights in Minnesota for 60 Years," *Star Tribune*, January 27, 2014, sec. Obituaries, <http://www.startribune.com/obituary-matthew-little-stood-up-for-civil-rights-in-minnesota-for-60-years/242320931/>.

⁶ Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), xiii.

⁷ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁸ *Ibid.*

This conclusion has concerning implications for Minnesotan history because it assumes racial inequality is someone else's problem—it was not a Minnesotan's responsibility. Minnesota did not erect signs to mark separate black and white facilities. Only some schools were officially segregated by law. Black voters were not systematically disenfranchised. But in both the North and the South, private behavior, market practices and public policies created and reinforced separation and inequality.⁹ This poverty and exclusion engendered despair. But they also fuel a deep burning indignation. Sugrue argues that the story of northern civil rights is “the story of how a fractious interracial left came together—tentatively—and brought the question of racial injustice to the political mainstream”.¹⁰ These unlikely, awkward and often contentious coalitions are where I situate my research. To understand the shift American racial attitudes requires telling the stories of myriad of individuals and organizations—like Local 614 and Local 665—most of them unknown and forgotten.¹¹ In response to Sugrue's critique of “northern racial innocence”, my research expands our understanding of what historian Jacquelyn Hall calls the “long civil rights movement”, a struggle rooted in the organizing of the 1930s and stretching far beyond the South. Organizing by black hotel workers in Minneapolis was one small segment of “decisive first phase” of this “long civil rights movement”.¹²

As Little's story demonstrates, the history of blacks in Minnesota have been shaped by both the external forces of white racism and the internal forces of the response to this racism. Just as race shaped where blacks could work and where they could organize, the demographic

⁹ Ibid., xv.

¹⁰ Ibid., 26.

¹¹ In his chapter “The ‘Forgotten Years’ of the Negro Revolution”, Dalfiume describes the 1930s and 1940s as the “forgotten years” of black struggle. Bernard Sternsher, *The Negro in Depression and War; Prelude to Revolution, 1930-1945*, (Chicago,: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 299.

¹² Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 1, 2005): 1235, doi:10.2307/3660172; For an excellent summary of literature on the “long civil rights history”, see Jeanne Theoharis, “Black Freedom Studies: Re-Imagining and Redefining the Fundamentals,” *History Compass* 4, no. 2 (2006): 348–67.

realities of Minnesota's small black population influenced the aspirations and political decision of black activists in Minnesota. To understand how this combination of external and internal forces shaped the experiences of black hotel workers, I begin with Section 1, summarizing the history of blacks in Minnesota, focusing on the connections to slavery that would later inform black service work in the state. Section 2 examines the role of the Great Migration and the Great Depression in shaping Minnesota's slowly growing black community. Section 3 and Section 4 look at importance of hotels to black workers, particularly in Minneapolis, but how these workers increasingly faced replacement by white workers. Section 5 analyzes race in hotel classified ads published in the *Minneapolis Tribune*, connecting back to the key themes discussed in Chapter 2.

Section 1: History of Blacks in Minnesota

To understand black waiters and their role in the Minnesota labor movement, we first need to establish the surrounding context. The first blacks in Minnesota were likely slaves. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s there may have been as many as 15 to 30 slaves living at Fort Snelling at any one time. Dredd Scott lived at Fort Snelling from 1836 to 1840, a slave to army surgeon Dr. John Emerson. While at Fort Snelling, Scott met and married Harriet Robinson. The Scotts left Fort Snelling with Emerson in 1840. While living in St. Louis they sued for their freedom in 1846, arguing that since they had lived in free territory while at Fort Snelling and other places they and their two daughters should be freed. Their 11 year legal battle ended in the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* Supreme Court decision upholding slavery.¹³ After the *Dredd Scott*

¹³ Charles Hallman, "How Is Dred Scott Connected to MN History?," *Minnesota Spokesman Recorder*, February 27, 2013, <http://spokesman-recorder.com/2013/02/27/how-is-dred-scott-connected-to-mn-history/>; Minnesota Historical Society, "Dred Scott's Quarters," *Historic Fort Snelling*, 2016, <http://www.historicfortsnelling.org/plan-visit/what-do/dred-scotts-quarters>.

decision in 1857, Minneapolis began promoting its hotels as vacation destinations for southern plantation owners looking to escape the heat and humidity of the south. Protected by *Dredd Scott*, these tourists brought their slaves with on vacations to Minnesota. Despite vocal outcry by abolitionists, the majority of residents tolerated this slavery in order to keep tourist dollars following into the state's young economy.¹⁴ Minneapolis newspaper *Lake Area* reported "St. Anthony residents got their first glimpse at [their southern guests] dressed in fine clothes quite different from the frontier homespun they were used to seeing. Another difference was the slaves brought along..."¹⁵ Recalling the discussion of racialized luxury in Chapter 2, the role of slavery as a display of luxury and class status is explicitly facilitated by Minnesota hotels. On the other hand, as black settlers began to trickle in the region, Minnesotan historian William Green argues that de jure segregation in early territorial Minnesota was "probably impractical in a place where bitter winters made mere survival a challenge, where one's success at farming and hunting was unpredictable and where relationships with the native population were uncertain".¹⁶ Minnesota's tolerance both of the few black settlers and slavery by tourists created a complicated and contradictory location for early black residents.

Acceptance of racial mixing declined as Minnesota neared statehood. The first legislature in 1849 restricted suffrage to white men but declined to segregate schools, which Green attributes to the tiny number of blacks in Minnesota—only 40 lived in St. Paul in 1850—and popular belief that number would not increase because Minnesota was far from slave states, with their fugitive slaves. In 1857, the St. Paul Board of Education voted to segregate St. Paul

¹⁴ William D. Green, "Eliza Winston and the Politics of Freedom in Minnesota, 1854-60," *Minnesota History*, 2000, 110–113; William D. Green, *A Peculiar Imbalance: The Fall and Rise of Racial Equality in Early Minnesota* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2007), 90–91.

¹⁵ Green, *A Peculiar Imbalance*, 91.

¹⁶ Anne J. Aby, *The North Star State: A Minnesota History Reader* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002), 335, Table of contents <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/fy035/2002010099.html>.

schools.¹⁷ In the mid-1850s, St. Paul legislators attempted to pass a bill discouraging black migration and when that failed, a measure that would restrict black residency to Minneapolis.¹⁸ After the Civil War ended, sentiment for extending suffrage to blacks slowly spread to Minnesota. A statewide referenda failed in 1865 and 1867 but in November 1868, voters amended the state constitution to allow black men to vote—the only northern state to approve black suffrage by popular vote. However, in Democratic St. Paul, at the time the largest city with the largest black population in Minnesota, referendum voters solidly opposed the amendment. By 1869, when Republican legislators banned school segregation in Minnesota, the issue was seen as a Southern problem. In 1896, when *Plessy v. Ferguson* declared separate but equal constitutional, the St. Paul *Pioneer Press* described the ruling as simply a “Jim Crow [railroad] car law” for southern states.¹⁹

Despite these legal victories, many Minnesotan restaurants and clubs refused to serve blacks, swimming pools remained segregated and restrictive covenants barred blacks from moving into white neighborhoods.²⁰ The threat of racial violence was never far from mind. In Duluth in 1920 six black workers from a traveling circus were arrested for allegedly assaulting a white girl. A mob broke into the jail, held a mock trial in the street and lynched three of the men. Photographs of the lynching look identical to mobs in the south. While the state legislature responded with an anti-lynching bill the following year, the backlash focused more on the flouting of the legal system than the lynching itself. In 1927, Minnesota passed a law banning discrimination at restaurants, stores and housing but it was rarely enforced. For example, when

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 336.

¹⁸ Mary Lethert Wingerd, *Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 77.

¹⁹ Aby, *The North Star State*, 342–345.

²⁰ David Vassar Taylor, “Pilgrim’s Progress: Black St. Paul and the Making of an Urban Ghetto, 1870-1930” 1977, 80–83.

black veteran Arthur Lee moved into an all-white Minneapolis neighborhood in 1931, a mob of thousands besieged his house for four days until civic leaders convinced Lee to sell the house.²¹

Blacks responded to racism and violence by organizing. A fraught alliance between outnumbered St. Paul Republicans and black voters gave blacks a certain amount of political leverage. Maximizing this leverage, by 1900 blacks had secured positions in St. Paul police and fire departments, on local juries and established a black company in the city militia.²² The St. Paul NAACP formed in 1913. The Minneapolis NAACP was founded in 1914. However, both chapters of the NAACP in Minnesota lacked resources and members and were in continuous processes of reviving.²³ By the 1920s, the number of migrants had overwhelmed local churches and business. In response to the need for increased social services, the National Urban League set up a Twin Cities chapter in 1923. Supplementing this were settlement houses, with the Phyllis Wheatley House in north Minneapolis founded in 1924 and the Hallie Q. Brown House in St. Paul in 1929.²⁴ Like most northern cities, black social service agencies in Minneapolis focused more on accommodating the hundreds of thousands of migrants rather than organizing them into a politically potent group.²⁵ By the 1930s, social service agencies were stretched thin by the Great Depression, leaving a void of large-scale organizations that blacks could utilize to make claims on the state.

²¹ Jennifer A. Delton, "Forging a Northern Strategy: Civil Rights in Liberal Democratic Politics, 1940-1948" 1997, 117-119; For more detailed information on these groups, see Whitney M. Young, "History of the St. Paul Urban League." (1947) and "The Story of Afro-Americans in the Story of Minnesota," *Gopher Historian* 23 (Winter - Winter 1969 1968).

²² Wingerd, *Claiming the City*, 77.

²³ Delton, "Forging a Northern Strategy," 117-118.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 121-124.

²⁵ Erik S Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress and the Rise of Militant Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 10.

Section 2: The Great Migration and the Great Depression

The most critical factor for blacks in Minnesota was their small number. Nationally, blacks moved in large numbers to cities. The number of blacks living in urban areas increased from 27% in 1920 to 44% in 1930. Like most large urban areas in the US, the Twin Cities were a destination black migrants in the late 1910s and early 1920s. However, the lack of major industry—as compared to states like Michigan, Ohio and Illinois—discouraged migration to Minnesota. Primarily agricultural states like Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa all saw similarly low increases in the number of black residents.²⁶ In addition, white business and community leaders, worried by the mounting racial strife visible in Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland and fearful of job competition, conspired to exclude blacks from the Twin Cities job market to further discourage their migration.²⁷ Employers refused to hire blacks who could not prove extended residence in the cities. As a result, blacks were excluded from wartime employment opportunities during World War I until conscription and a pause in immigration created a labor shortage. Even with this labor shortage, there was immense reluctance to hire blacks above customary positions of service jobs.

As white veterans returned home from World War I, blacks lost any progress they had made in employment.²⁸ A black newspaper editor wrote that the only options in Minnesota were humiliation “by illegal discriminatory practices” or a “grim fight for the rights which are justly ours”.²⁹ Many corporations laid off large numbers of blacks during this time period in Minnesota.³⁰ Unable to secure adequate employment, large numbers of Minnesotan born blacks,

²⁶ Earl Spangler, *The Negro in Minnesota*. (Minneapolis: T.S. Denison, 1961), 97–99.

²⁷ Taylor, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” 225.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 225–227.

²⁹ Spangler, *The Negro in Minnesota.*, 107.

³⁰ Editors, “Unemployment Effecting the Negro,” *Minneapolis Messenger*, May 6, 1922.

particularly those with high school educations, left the state between 1926 and 1940 looking for jobs.³¹ Because they had been largely excluded from the wartime propensity Minnesota in the 1920s, the number of blacks in Minnesota grew by only 483 between 1930 and 1940.³² By 1930, census data estimated 9,445 blacks lived in Minnesota, comprising only 0.4% of the state population. Minnesota blacks were mostly migrants, with 74.5% having been born outside the state and were highly concentrated in the Twin Cities, with 86.58% residing in St. Paul and Minneapolis, constituting 1.4% of the population of those two cities.³³

Delton describes the small number of black residents in Minneapolis as a “distinctly parochial” community. Without the jobs to attract and sustain large numbers of blacks, many talented young blacks left the state for larger, more diverse cities.³⁴ Black newspaper in Minnesota swelled with news about a few prominent families, their guest lists, vacations and fraternal involvement. Between stories of the respectable families, editorials castigated recent migrants for threatening the reputation of the established black community. Nelson Peery, in his autobiography *Black Fire*, describes that despite its small size, blacks in Minneapolis were “color-struck”, writing, “The light-skinned section was better educated and had better jobs, such as waiters in the big hotels. They socialized and banded together against the lower-class, darker-

³¹ The Governor’s Interracial Commission formed in 1943 in response to fears about rioting in Minnesota following a summer of riots in Los Angeles, Harlem and Detroit. Governor’s Interracial Commission, *The Negro Worker in Minnesota, a Report to Governor Edward J. Thye of Minnesota* (St. Paul, 1945), 3; Taylor, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” 225; Walter Ryder, “The Negro in St. Paul,” *Opportunity; Journal of Negro Life*, June 1931, 131; “Negro Youth in Minnesota” (National Youth Administration, n.d.), New Deal Agencies and Black America, Schomburg Center for Black Culture, New York Public Libraries.

³² Governor’s Interracial Commission, *The Negro Worker in Minnesota, a Report to Governor Edward J. Thye of Minnesota*, 3; Spangler, *The Negro in Minnesota*, 96–97.

³³ Keep in mind how inaccurate the census data these numbers were produced from can be. The Commission notes this, explaining that mixed race individuals and fair skinned blacks could have been recorded as white. Spangler, *The Negro in Minnesota*, 98; Governor’s Interracial Commission, *The Negro Worker in Minnesota, a Report to Governor Edward J. Thye of Minnesota*, 3.

³⁴ Delton points out that in listing of famous black Minnesotans, one notices that nearly every one of them left the state early in their careers. Cecil Newman, editor of the *Minneapolis Spokesman*, in 1945 commented that all blacks of “national reputation” always left. Delton, “Forging a Northern Strategy,” 125–126.

hued folk. They openly resented the growing trickle of black-skinned immigrants, the ‘field Negroes’ coming up from the South”.³⁵ Playing in the streets as a kid, Peery recalled the children of established families kept aloof from the children of recent migrants and whose parents held exclusive parties.³⁶

This pursuit of respectability and networks of social organizations were part of surviving a racist society. The mutual support provided by fraternities, social clubs and church groups lent itself to culture of solidarity that emboldened union organizing. Closely bound networks of social clubs, fraternities and church groups, however, created a way of life from which a younger generation yearned to escape.³⁷ As Chapter 5 will discuss, the leadership of Local 614 and 665 defined their organizing in part as an escape from this isolation. On the other hand, the insular communities of black residents in Minneapolis could also prevent anti-union intimidation. In her oral history, Nellie Stone Johnson explains that her boss at the Minneapolis Athletic Club, Captain Crowder, a black man and captain of the elevator operators, the checkroom, the bellmen and janitors, could threaten Johnson about the union but never did anything because of the strength of the BSCP among Minnesotan blacks. “I had four uncles in the Brotherhood and word got back to Captain Crowder not to be too rough. He knew the background of the people who worked for him,” Johnson explained, “I think what Captain Crowder was most afraid of was being written up in the black paper... They could write about the black captain who helped get all these people with good jobs at the Athletic Club fired for organizing, with their brothers in

³⁵ Nelson Peery, *Black Fire: The Making of an American Revolutionary* (New York: New Press :, 1994), 22–23.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁷ Delton, “Forging a Northern Strategy,” 127.

unions”.³⁸ In cities with larger numbers of black residents, this outside pressure—both physical threat and public shaming—may not have existed.

The onset of the Great Depression hit the black communities of Minnesota hard. At a meeting of the St. Paul Urban League in 1938, a speaker explained that 69% of black families in St. Paul were on direct relief or participated federal programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps or the Works Progress Administration. Minneapolis presumably had similar conditions. Pervasive discrimination in relief administration and in work placement for government sponsored projects further magnified the Great Depression’s impact on Minnesotan blacks.³⁹ A survey of 222 married black men in Minneapolis in 1926 showed a median wage of \$22.55 per week. According to the standard set by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, \$43.51 per week was necessary to maintain a level of health and decency for a family of five. Only 4 black men in Minneapolis earned enough per week to achieve that minimum standard. Many women also worked to support their families but jobs for black women were even scarcer.⁴⁰

Section 3: Black Service Workers in Minnesota

As discussed in Chapter 2, hotels played on white customers’ nostalgia for slavery and the associated southern gentile traditions—a “slavery fantasy”—by employing black workers to emphasize the hotel’s luxurious accommodations. With southern tourists bringing slaves with on their Minnesota vacations in the early 1860s, the connection between hotels and slavery became literal. As far as the earliest days of settlement, most blacks in Minnesota worked in hotels. The

³⁸ Nellie Stone Johnson and David Brauer, *Nellie Stone Johnson: The Life of an Activist* (Saint Paul, Minn.: Ruminator Books, 2000), 83–84.

³⁹ Holmquist includes an excellent map depicting this shift in residency between 1860 and 1970. June Drenning Holmquist, *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State’s Ethnic Groups* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981), 83.

⁴⁰ Maurine. Boie, “A Study of Conflict and Accommodation in Negro-White Relations in the Twin Cities: Based on Documentary Sources” 1932, 124–126.

largest employer of blacks in Minnesota in the 1880s was the Metropolitan Hotel, until it was eclipsed by the Hotel Ryan in 1886, with a nearly all-black staff of waiters, porters and cooks.⁴¹ A 1931 survey by Macalester sociologist Walter Ryder shows the majority of St. Paul blacks preformed domestic service. St. Paul hotels and clubs employed 130 blacks, approximately 15% of the blacks working in the city.⁴² A 1936 study of St. Paul relief rolls confirms this, with 40% of blacks listing their previous employment as “domestic service”.⁴³ Lacking the railroads and packing houses of St. Paul, Minneapolis’ hotels and clubs employed two-thirds of all blacks working in the city, with the Curtis Hotel the largest employer with 65 black waiters.⁴⁴ The raw data from Harris and Carter’s 1926 study shows how even within those hotels and clubs, blacks were only employed as housekeepers, waiters, porters and elevator operators.⁴⁵ Nationally, blacks made up nearly a fifth of all hotel workers in the US in 1940.⁴⁶ The absolute lack of jobs for blacks in Minneapolis following the onset of the Great Depression is emphasized by Cassius: “[The] only place you could work prior to 1940 was the Curtis Hotel and you only worked in one capacity there, in the dining room. And they only kept you there because they didn’t pay you nothing...”.⁴⁷ A 1957 report by the Minneapolis Fair Employment Practice Office shows little

⁴¹ David Vassar Taylor, *African Americans in Minnesota*, The People of Minnesota; People of Minnesota. (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002), 15.

⁴² Ryder, “The Negro in St. Paul,” 170; “4000 Given as Total Race Population of Saint Paul by Macalester Sociologist,” *Northwest Monitor*, June 8, 1930.

⁴³ Governor’s Interracial Commission, *The Negro Worker in Minnesota, a Report to Governor Edward J. Thye of Minnesota*, 16.

⁴⁴ Of the 251 employers who responded to surveys, 269 blacks were reported employed in Minneapolis. The Nicollet Hotel employed 26, the Radisson Hotel 14, the Curtis Hotel 65, the Minneapolis Athletic Club 33, the Andrew Hotel 19 and the West Hotel 8. Ibid.; Abram Lincoln Harris and William A. Darity, *Race, Radicalism, and Reform Selected Papers of Abram Harris* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1988), 64.

⁴⁵ Of the 231 black service workers employed in 1926, 51 worked as hotel housekeepers, 46 as waiters, 42 as porters, 42 as elevator operators and bellhops and 5 in other positions. The distinction between bellhops and porters is unclear. Boie, “A Study of Conflict and Accommodation in Negro-White Relations in the Twin Cities,” 96.

⁴⁶ Of the 552,655 hotel workers reported in the US in 1940, 103,646 were black. Edward Clifford. Koziara and Karen Shallcross Koziara, *The Negro in the Hotel Industry*, The Racial Policies of American Industry. Rept. No. 4; Racial Policies of American Industry; Rept. No. 4. (Philadelphia,; Industrial Research Unit, Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, University of Pennsylvania; distributed by University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 8.

⁴⁷ Anthony Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, interview by Carl Ross, December 1, 1981, 33–34, Minnesota Historical Society.

changed even after union organizing, with black workers limited to a few job categories.⁴⁸

Overall, Minneapolis blacks faced stark employment options and even those who could find work faced severe job place discrimination.

At the same time, among blacks, these service workers were seen as having prestigious jobs. Little has been written about black service workers in Minnesota, so I turn to literature on black service workers elsewhere in US to explain what might have happened in Minnesota. In Chicago before World War I, the Pullman porter was not only a member of the black middle-class but among its leading members. Bates' research on Pullman porters in Chicago suggests that black waiters in Minneapolis may also have assigned middle-class status as much on the basis of a refined, sober life-style and non-manual jobs as they did to sources income—a category that included porters, hotel waiters and postal clerks.⁴⁹ Similarly, in *Black Milwaukee*, Joe Trotter explains that, of all the black hotel workers, only waiters seemed to transcend the “stigma of servility” attached to this type of work because they could look to promotion as “third, second and finally headwaiter, a lucrative position of considerable prestige” in the small black Milwaukee community.⁵⁰ In Cleveland, Kenneth Kusmer argues, headwaiters in particular were often held in high esteem by both the black and white communities, with a few even considered community leaders.⁵¹ The prestige given waiters, as Trotter and Kusmer explain, could have occurred in Minneapolis as well.

⁴⁸ Donald H. Moersch, “Employment Opportunities for Non-Whites In Minneapolis Hotel and Restaurant Industry” (Minneapolis Fair Employment Practice Office, August 1957), 127.L.13.2 (F), Minnesota Human Rights Department Records, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁴⁹ Beth Tompkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 24; Philip F Rubio, *There's Always Work at the Post Office: African American Postal Workers and the Fight for Jobs, Justice, and Equality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 8.

⁵⁰ Joe William Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-45*, Blacks in the New World; Blacks in the New World. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 12.

⁵¹ Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930*, Blacks in the New World; Blacks in the New World. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 75; *The Chicago Colored People's Blue Book and*

In the forward to the book *Reframing Randolph*, AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Emerita Arlene Holt Baker recalls the deceased husband of her childhood neighbor, Mrs. Bunn. In Mrs. Bunn's words, "Mr. Bunn was a man who ran the railroad, made a good living, plus tips, was well spoken, dignified, wore a uniform to work and took care of his family".⁵² Although Randolph was never mentioned by name, Baker writes, it was "his ideals of black working-class manhood that formed the portrait of the black man was well respected and revered in our home, our neighborhood and our church".⁵³ Even in the minds of people who never saw themselves as union supporters, the vision of a dignified black worker—heavily linked to ideals of respectability—was the BSCP member. With large numbers of BSCP members in Minneapolis and St. Paul, this "portrait" likely existed and would have shaped what black hotel workers organizing their unions aspired to.

Clarence Lang's work about St. Louis during the Great Depression suggests that any stably employed black in Minneapolis could claim respectability and elite status. As a result, the distance between hotel waiters and a day laborer could be tremendous.⁵⁴ Even the elegant uniform of the hotel worker, as far removed from the denim of the field laborer as possible, emphasized the status of these workers. Nellie Stone Johnson described how where you worked determined your "social rung" in black society in Minneapolis. The best jobs were sleeping car porters, dining car waiters and postal employees. The next tier was hotel and club employees

Business Directory even listed headwaiters alongside doctors and lawyers. See Margaret Garb, "The Great Chicago Waiters' Strike Producing Urban Space, Organizing Labor, Challenging Racial Divides in 1890s Chicago," *Journal of Urban History* 40, no. 6 (November 1, 2014): 1086, doi:10.1177/0096144214536864.

⁵² Clarence Lang and Andrew E. Kersten, *Reframing Randolph: Labor, Black Freedom, and the Legacies of A. Philip Randolph* (NYU Press, 2015), x, <http://nyupress.org/books/9780814785942/>.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Clarence Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-75, Class, Culture; Class, Culture*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 250, ebrary <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10389772>.

because of the steady pay check and the fact that many of these workers were highly educated.⁵⁵ Nelson Peery writes in his autobiography *Black Fire* about anti-migrant attitudes of more established Minneapolis blacks, made up of a "...light-skinned section [that] was better educated and had better jobs, such as waiters in the big hotels".⁵⁶ With racial barriers presenting so few job options for blacks, the combination of the stringent perquisites and comparably decent of Pullman Porters and hotel workers gave the jobs and the men occupying them an element of prestige.

Additionally, employees at luxury hotels and clubs gained status because of the status of the customers. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton's focus on Chicago in *Black Metropolis* but a useful comparison can be drawn to Minneapolis hotel workers. In a chapter titled "The Negro as Servant", Drake and Cayton quote E. Franklin Frazier's 1932 dissertation *The Negro Family in Chicago*, "The Negro community recognized the favored position of the waiter, butler and chauffeur...They had close contacts with the wealthy whites and were able to acquire the manners, polish and social graces attendant to upper class behavior".⁵⁷ Beyond the wealth of the customers, the close association with whites gave status to these jobs. For most whites, black service workers were the only blacks who had entry in the segregated white world.⁵⁸ Even when admitting discrimination left him with no other choice for employment, Albert Allen explained that working the Minneapolis Athletic Club meant "oh you're a big wheel".⁵⁹ Close interactions with white and wealthy customers increased the status of hotel waiters.

⁵⁵ Nellie Stone Johnson, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, interview by Hyman Berman et al., March 1, 1988, 9, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁵⁶ Peery, *Black Fire*, 23.

⁵⁷ St. Clair Drake and Horace R Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 232.

⁵⁸ Janice L. Reiff and Susan E. Hirsch, "Pullman and Its Public: Image and Aim in Making and Interpreting History," *The Public Historian* 11, no. 4 (October 1, 1989): 102, doi:10.2307/3378069.

⁵⁹ Albert Allen, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Albert V. Allen, Jr., interview by Carl Ross, June 17, 1981, 5, Minnesota Historical Society.

By constructing a list of members of Local 614 and Local 665 and adding to it the names of other black hotel workers, I can begin to picture the “average” black hotel union member in Minneapolis.⁶⁰ Migrants made up 80% of black hotel workers, with most originally from Missouri, followed by similar numbers from Alabama, Iowa, Kansas and Louisiana. Hotel workers migrating from the South were slightly more likely to live in North Minneapolis and Minnesota natives more likely to live in South Minneapolis. Black hotel workers who were members of a union were just as likely to be migrants as the average black hotel worker in Minneapolis, but 57% of union members lived in South Minneapolis, compared to 47% of all black hotel workers. The average age of a black hotel worker in Minneapolis in 1940 was 40 years old. The average age of a migrant hotel worker was 42, significantly higher than a hotel worker native to Minnesota’s average age of 32. 13% of black hotel workers owned their own house, which is significantly lower than the overall black house ownership rate of 25% in Minneapolis.⁶¹ However, 31% of known union members owned their own house, suggesting union membership encouraged black hotel workers to sink in roots and stay put.

For educated blacks, hotels offered the best jobs available. The average black hotel worker in Minneapolis had 9 years of education, one more year than overall Minneapolis black population. Union members had on average one more year of education than non-union

⁶⁰ I compiled a list of 108 black hotel and club workers living in Minneapolis from the 1930 and 1940 census records. The list was created by searching hotel and club occupations including: “porter”, “waiter”, “busboy”, “chambermaid”, “doorman”, “bellhop”, “maid”, “elevator operator” and “handball attendant”. The sampling of black hotel and club workers was limited by the types of searches permitted by the census database. While we cannot assume this non-random sample is truly representative of the population, my conclusions are similar to other researchers, which suggests the sampling is representative enough to be used for my analysis. Several known union members could not be located in the census record. Amusingly, the less common of a last name a member had, the more likely I was to find them, creating an interesting bias.

⁶¹ In Minneapolis, 398 black households lived in a house they owned and 1177 households rented. United States. Bureau of the Census., Leon E. Truesdell, and United States. Bureau of the Census., *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940. Population and Housing. Statistics for Census Tracts, Minneapolis, Minn.* (Washington,: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1942), 47.

members and Minnesotan natives had on average one more year of education than migrants.⁶² 53% of hotel workers and 66% of union hotel workers had at least one year of high school, compared to 40% of Minneapolis blacks. 13% of hotel workers and 30% of union hotel workers had completed at least one year of college, compared to only 6% of Minneapolis blacks.⁶³ Known union hotel waiters—specifically waiters, not just hotel workers—were likely to be older, married and slightly more educated than non-union waiters. Only one black woman could be located who worked as a hotel waiter. Despite making up 20% of black hotel workers, black women made up less than 10% of the known union members. The average black woman working in a hotel was slightly older than the average black man and had one less year of education. Black women who were union members had an average of one more year of education than non-union black women and had an equivalent education to that of average black man working in a hotel.

As these census records show, black hotel workers and especially union hotel workers had the trappings of middle-class respectability: home ownership, education and living in the right part of town, confirming the status these jobs held. The older age of hotel workers suggest two things: one, a union hotel job was a job to keep as long as possible. Two, the desirability of hotel jobs among blacks was slipping. Drawing from Bates' research on Chicago, the Great Migration could also have raised the expectations of young, educated blacks in Minnesota.⁶⁴ A growing portion of young blacks would rather work in a factory than work as what they saw as a

⁶² Median schools completed for blacks in Minneapolis: 8.4. Migrant education: 9.1 years vs. Minnesota education: 10.2 years. Average education of black hotel worker in Minnesota: 9.3 vs union member education: 10.3. United States. Bureau of the Census. and United States. Bureau of the Census., *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population. Second Series. : Characteristics of Population: Minnesota.* (Washington: U.S. Gov't. Print. Off., 1942), 171.

⁶³ United States. Bureau of the Census. and United States. Bureau of the Census., *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population. Second Series. : Characteristics of Population: Minnesota.* (Washington: U.S. Gov't. Print. Off., 1942), 171.

⁶⁴ Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945*, 24–25.

servants. Margaret Garb's work about Chicago suggests that for blacks working in Minneapolis hotels, even if the "head waiter carried the marks of masculine authority in the industrial city, the waiters and other subordinates who worked beneath him did not". The average black waiter's name was not listed in business directories or newspaper gossip sections—they were instead rendered part of the invisible mass of service workers. While black civic leaders proudly advertised the number of black head waiters in their city, they were, at best, ambivalent about the growing numbers of blacks working at lower levels in the hotels and restaurants.⁶⁵ New occupations carried hopes of advancements, something lacking for many of these service jobs. Blacks had not moved north to wait tables—they went north to improve their place in America. For blacks in Minnesota, with little else to go, union organizing offered a chance to reverse the decline of hotel jobs.

The census provides an interesting look at racial attitudes in the US. The census records of Beryl Marrow, a black doorman at the Curtis Hotel for twenty years and likely member of Local 665—he worked alongside Robert Kelly, a founder of Local 665—demonstrates show of the complexities of using the census.⁶⁶ In this era, the census was recorded by interviewers going door to door. The interviewer would judge someone's race by their observation. In the 1920s, the US was obsessed with racial mixture. "Mulatto" was a category for the US to track people of mixed race and distinguish them from blacks and whites. By 1940, American ideology of white supremacy had shifted to enforcing a strict bright line between whites and blacks to maintain white racial purity and the census' racial categories were reduced to "negro" and

⁶⁵ Garb, "The Great Chicago Waiters' Strike Producing Urban Space, Organizing Labor, Challenging Racial Divides in 1890s Chicago," 1086.

⁶⁶ Curtis Hotel, "Curtis Courtesies," *Curtis Events Weekly*, February 3, 1922, TX941.C87 C87, Minnesota Historical Society.

“white”.⁶⁷ In his 1920 census record, Morrow is described as mulatto but in his 1940 census record he is described as black.⁶⁸ This suggests Morrow could be fair skinned or even white passing to be recorded as mulatto. The 1937 Minneapolis city directory lists Morrow as working as a bartender.⁶⁹ At that time, the bartender union in Minneapolis was all white and strictly segregated the industry. To work as a bartender, Morrow would have to present as white.⁷⁰ Nobles Houser, a black waiter at the Minnesota Club in St. Paul and president of all-black HERE Local 603 was listed as white on his death certificate.⁷¹ Without knowing anything more about them, these vital records of Morrow and Houser show the fluidity of whiteness in this era. This fluidity informed internal divisions among black residents of Minneapolis because it affected who could have certain jobs and who could hold certain leadership positions.

Section 4: The Replacement of Black Hotel Workers

The consumer tastes of white customers were fickle and nostalgia for slavery faded over time. However, it is difficult to assess the how quickly this replacement of black hotel workers occurred. In *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, Kenneth Kusmer argues the decline of Cleveland black entrepreneurs who served an elite white clientele is due to a “growing antipathy on the part of

⁶⁷ D’Vera Cohn, “Race and the Census: The ‘Negro’ Controversy,” *Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project*, January 21, 2010, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/01/21/race-and-the-census-the-%e2%80%9cnegro%e2%80%9d-controversy/>.

⁶⁸ 1920 U.S. Census, Hennepin County, Minnesota, Population Schedule, Minneapolis, sheet 26A, dwelling 5, 1143 Emerson Ave N, Beryl Morrow, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://www.ancestry.com/>; 1940 U.S. Census, Hennepin County, Minnesota, Population Schedule, Minneapolis, sheet 3B, dwelling 66, 3833 4th Ave. S., Beryl Morrow, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://www.ancestry.com/>.

⁶⁹ *Minneapolis, Minnesota, City Directory, 1937* (Minneapolis, MN: 1937), page 1028, entry for “Morrow, Beryl,” digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://www.ancestry.com/>.

⁷⁰ Taylor, *African Americans in Minnesota*, 48.

⁷¹ It is also possible Nobles Houser was a white president of a black union. “[Local 603],” *Twin City Herald*, March 31, 1934. Minnesota. Certificate of Death No. 16433 (July 13, 1974), Nobles Houser. Minnesota Department of Health, Section of Vital Statistics. Uncertified copy in possession of author; 1940 U.S. Census, Ramsey County, Minnesota, Population Schedule, St. Paul, sheet 5B, dwelling 49, 257 Rondo St., Beatrice and Nobles Houser, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed November 14, 2016, <http://www.ancestry.com/>.

whites toward trading with Negro businessmen”.⁷² As the Great Migration increased racial tensions in the north, black employment suffered. A 1945 *Crisis* article tracing the history of black catering businesses in Philadelphia attributed the decline growing segregation and the resulting “loss of personal contact with the fashionable group whose first though used to be the Negro when ‘service’ for any kind was to be done”.⁷³ Research by the NAACP in Baltimore shows that between 1870 and 1915, many black waiters in luxury hotels and restaurants were slowly replaced with white workers, with the more desirable jobs lost first.⁷⁴ These examples from Baltimore, Philadelphia and Cleveland highlight a national trend away from the employment of black waiters in luxury establishments, suggesting this replacement occurred in Minnesota as well. The image of the servile black waiter held by northern employers and their white customers, and linked to sentimental fictions of southern plantation life, was giving way to a new vision of service workers.

Jacqueline Jones’ work on 1920s New York suggests that Minneapolis employers were more self-conscious about their public image and sought more waiters who conformed to white American standards of beauty, thus switching to almost exclusively whites. The waitress was increasingly conceived as an extension of home life, performing the role of wives and mothers for a newly urbanized workforce in an impersonal big city.⁷⁵ American consumer culture shifted to depend upon a racialized “style” not only to sell but also to produce certain products. As a

⁷² Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 77.

⁷³ G.J. Fleming and Berenice D. Shelton, “Fine Foods of Philadelphia,” *Crisis* 45 (April 1945): 107, 114; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, “Papers of the NAACP. Part 12: Selected Branch Files, 1913-1939. Series C: The Midwest” n.d., Schomburg Center for Black Culture, New York Public Libraries.

⁷⁴ Edward Lewis to Walter White, September 24, 1937, Papers of the NAACP. Part 10: Peonage, labor, and the New Deal, 1913-1939, Schomburg Center for Black Culture, New York Public Libraries.

⁷⁵ Garb, “The Great Chicago Waiters’ Strike Producing Urban Space, Organizing Labor, Challenging Racial Divides in 1890s Chicago,” 15; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 23; Daniel Levinson Wilk, “Paula Deen’s Racist Wedding Fantasy Was Once Reality,” *Bloomberg View*, June 25, 2013, <http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2013-06-25/paula-deen-s-racist-wedding-fantasy-was-once-reality>.

Minneapolis hotel manager put it, "...you are catering to the public's demand directly through your employees [race]".⁷⁶ Jones writes that by the 1920s, this style shifted to emphasize the young, white, wealthy and glamorous and while the vast majority of white workers could similarly never conform to such glamour, blacks seemed to represent its "antithesis in the eyes of white advertisers, employers and consumers", further prompting their replacement in service jobs.⁷⁷ Black women were hit even harder than black men: because of their gender, black women had already been excluded from the few waiting jobs open to black men—those in elegant hotels or trains that catered to travelers and business elite—because those locations did not require the homelike, informal, intimate atmosphere associated with black women. Tea rooms one of few places available to black waitresses because black women were seen as "completing the atmosphere" of a tea room by resembling domestic servants in upper-class homes.⁷⁸

The growing strength of a white labor movement only speed up the replacement of black hotel workers. Jones writes, "At times this form of job discrimination transcended demographic imbalances and entered the realm of overt political conflict, when trade unions simultaneously monopolized employment and barred black people from membership and when white workers found new and creative ways to drive blacks from the labor force".⁷⁹ A less xenophobic labor movement allowed recent immigrants to replace black workers. Employers shifted from seeing blacks as natural servants to evaluating blacks as unable to serve efficiently.⁸⁰ By the 1930s, blacks had lost much of their monopoly on many service jobs nationwide.⁸¹ With the start of the

⁷⁶ Moersch, "Employment Opportunities for Non-Whites In Minneapolis Hotel and Restaurant Industry," 22.

⁷⁷ Jacqueline Jones, *American Work: Four Centuries of Black and White Labor* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 335–336.

⁷⁸ Cobble, *Dishing It out*, 18.

⁷⁹ Jones, *American Work*, 322–323.

⁸⁰ Trotter, *Black Milwaukee*, 15.

⁸¹ Jones, *American Work*, 321–322; Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 235.

Great Depression, this trend only grew. Those few blacks who managed to retain their food service jobs suffered downward mobility, relegated to the worst paying positions or reduced to busing dishes.

Unlike the “employment niches” of immigrant groups that enabled upward mobility, blacks had monopoly over only dead end jobs like porter or Red Caps.⁸² Long hours and hard work lead to nothing beyond the merit of faithful service. In extreme cases, some black workers reached their maximum wage rate after only a few months on the job—no matter how long or devoted their service, they could earn no more in the way of a wage increase or promotion.⁸³ The bitter 1925 complaint of a black Pittsburgh steelworker likely echoes the unrecorded sentiments of Minnesotan blacks, “The large number of blacks who toiled long hours as cooks, porters or laundresses understood all too well that these were ‘blind alley’ jobs”.⁸⁴ Because the possibilities for mobility were so limited, individual aspirations necessarily remained painfully low. Jones illustrates the constrictions on black employment with an anecdote from a New York City high school principal asking a black youth what he wanted to do for a living:

[The] youth...replied, “I am going to be a doorboy, sir.” Pressed, he replied, “I should like to be an office boy”. His questioner continued, “Well, what next?” A moment’s silence and “I should try to get a position as bell boy.” “What next?” A rather contemplative mood, and then, “I should like to climb to the position of head bell boy”.⁸⁵

Even for blacks with a high school or college education, they faced the harsh reality that they would enter the workforce as a boy and forever remain a boy.

⁸² Jones, *American Work*, 306–307.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 306–307.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 334–335.

While the loss of hotel jobs was slow to spread to the Midwest, as the Depression dragged on, Pullman porters and redcaps were laid off by Minnesotan railroads.⁸⁶ Black waiters in Minneapolis, already hurt by the lingering impacts of the Prohibition on restaurants, lost their jobs to white waiters.⁸⁷ Nationally, the percentage of waiters who were black dropped from 35% in 1930 to 8% by 1940. The percent of black men working as waiters fell from 16% in 1910 to only 10% in 1940.⁸⁸ This trend is repeated locally in Minneapolis. Between 1910 and 1940, black service workers as a percentage of all service workers in Minneapolis fell by half. During this same period, the percent of blacks in Minneapolis working in non-domestic service jobs increased from 45% to 54%. The number of black men working as waiters held steady at approximately 200 from 1910 to 1930 but dropped to 106 in 1940 even as the total number of waiters in Minneapolis increased.⁸⁹ In 1933, the West Hotel in Minneapolis fired every black worker.⁹⁰ Throughout the 1930s, the Nicollet Hotel and St. Paul Hotel were sites of constant struggle for employment by black workers.⁹¹ By the early 1940s, even the Curtis Hotel, famous for its all-black wait staff and the location of the founding members of Local 614, appears to have replaced the majority of its black workers. Barry Menezes, who stayed in the hotel for a

⁸⁶ Kusmer argues that replacement happened later and more slowly in less industrialized cities because of the slower rate of immigration. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 76.

⁸⁷ Holmquist, *They Chose Minnesota*, 83; Taylor, "Pilgrim's Progress," 229; Thomas E. Reinhart, *The Minneapolis Black Community, 1863-1926* ([Collegeville, Minn.]: St. John's University, 1970), 47–48.

⁸⁸ These numbers exclude waiters on trains. The percent of waiters who were black women changed little between 1910 and 1950 at around 8%. Cobble, *Dishing It out*, 208–209.

⁸⁹ United States. Bureau of the Census. et al., *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910: Population, Occupation Statistics*, vol. 4 (Washington,: Govt. Print. Off., 1912); United States. Bureau of the Census., *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920: Occupations*, vol. 4 (Washington,: Govt. Print. Off., 1921); United States. Bureau of the Census., *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Occupation Statistics, United States Summary* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932); United States. Bureau of the Census. and United States. Bureau of the Census., *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population. Third Series. : The Labor Force Occupation, Industry, Employment, and Income: Minnesota*. (Washington: U.S. Gov't. Print. Off., 1942).

⁹⁰ Johnson and Brauer, *Nellie Stone Johnson*, 78–79.

⁹¹ "Nicollet Hotel Engages Waiters for New Cafe," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, September 25, 1936; "Nicollet Hotel Discharges Race Waiter Crew," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, November 13, 1936; "Negro Waiters Face Loss of St. Paul Hotel," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, October 15, 1939.

year and a half as a child, remembered an all-white staff of recent Scandinavian immigrants.⁹² A 1957 report found only 18 black waiters in a survey of 34 Minneapolis employers, including the Curtis Hotel and 11 other downtown hotels.⁹³ The cultural image of black men from servile, natural servants—an image based in slavery—had shifted to an image of the urban, militant black man, undercutting the marketability of their labor by hotels and restaurants. Overall, replacement by white workers devastated the number of blacks employed in service jobs in Minneapolis and increased the fierce competition for few service jobs remaining open to blacks.

Section 5: Classified Ads

To expand our understanding of race and service work in Minneapolis hotels, I now turn to an analysis of hotels' help wanted ads and prospective workers' positions wanted ads placed in the *Minneapolis Tribune*.⁹⁴ During this era, classified ads were divided into separate sections for men and women—emphasizing the gendered nature of service jobs—allowing for easier comparison of how race shaped hotel employment differently depending on gender. Earlier in the 1930s, hotels placed ads specifying application was limited to white men and white women, with help wanted ads such as “Wanted exp. White man for gen. hotel work, New Gayety Hotel” and “Night maid for small hotel. Alert, over 35 & white”.⁹⁵ Similarly, both hotels and

⁹² Barry Menuetz, interview by Luke Mielke, March 4, 2016.

⁹³ Out of 78 waiters employed by the responding employers, 15 were black, 13 Filipino and 2 Chinese, with non-white waiters making up 38% of Minneapolis wait staff. Given these small numbers, it is likely not all respondents provided full employment data. Moersch, “Employment Opportunities for Non-Whites In Minneapolis Hotel and Restaurant Industry,” 12, 24.

⁹⁴ I examined all Sunday classified ads in the *Minneapolis Tribune* listed under “Hotel and Restaurant” for both men and women between January 1934 and December 1939, for a total of 312 Sundays. In order to compare the influence of unions on hotel classified ads and to control for the impact of the Great Depression, I chose to examine a range of years that included significant growth in hotel union density. The *Minneapolis Star*, an afternoon newspaper with minimal business reporting, had a very limited number of classifieds and did not publish Sunday editions so I excluded it from my research sample. 37 ads explicitly mentioned race. See the appendix for a complete list of the ad text.

⁹⁵ “Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, October 27, 1935, sec. Classifieds; “Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, April 19, 1936, sec. Classifieds.

employment services would note certain jobs were for blacks only, including ads like “Colored woman for maid work in hotel. Exp. & refer” and “Cook \$100--Small Hotel. Fare PD. Porter. Colored good for \$60. Fare Pd”.⁹⁶ Many ads included ethnic preferences, particularly Scandinavians and Germans, which excluded both non-white applicants and more recent immigrants, who often fell into a racial status between white and non-white.⁹⁷ For example, “Experienced hotel man, preferably Scandinavian for 50-room Washington ave S. hotel. State experience and references”.⁹⁸ After 1935, no help wanted ad explicitly requests white applicants only. There is a significant drop off in mentions of ethnicity for men and by the late 1930s, hotels generally only specify ethnicity for women.

In these ads, there is an assumption that every applicant would be white unless requested otherwise. Ads note when both whites and blacks could apply, such as “All around cook for country hotel, white or colored. State age, exp, qualifications & wages” and “Dishwasher, one who can help cook. No objection to color, country hotel. Full maintenance, wages \$20 per mo”.⁹⁹ This complicates my ability to draw conclusions about the role of race in classifieds ads because it becomes nearly impossible to track changes. That ads stop openly requesting white applicants

⁹⁶ “Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, June 19, 1938, sec. Classifieds; “Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 31, 1936, sec. Classifieds.

⁹⁷ Many hotel workers in Minneapolis were Eastern European immigrants. Much like the Irish before them, these recent immigrants were seen “in-between” white and non-white because they were not protestant, Western Europeans. By giving preference to Scandinavians, this hotel is distinguishing between white Scandinavians and non-white blacks and Eastern Europeans. However, many thing such as non-segregated housing and white unions remained accessible to Eastern Europeans because of their status as “in-between” and not always non-white like blacks. For a more detailed analysis of this “in-between” white and non-white status of recent immigrants, see David R. Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White : The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

⁹⁸ “Help Wanted-Men Hotel and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 4, 1934, sec. Classifieds; A few rare ads curiously specified ethnicities other than Scandinavian and German, including this ad for a Polish hotel maid. This goes to show how arbitrary discrimination is and that sometimes hotel managers had strange preferences in their discrimination. “Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 17, 1936, sec. Classifieds.

⁹⁹ “Help Wanted-Men Hotel and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 2, 1935, sec. Classifieds; “Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, March 6, 1938, sec. Classifieds.

by 1935 has less significance if in 1938 an ad has to mention that both white and black workers can apply.

As the depression dragged on, there were far more positions wanted ads than help wanted ads. Similar to the hotels, some individuals state their race. Position wanted ads by blacks generally mention their race early in the ad, such as “Neat colored girl wants maid work in hotel or housework. Can furnish references” or even emphasize it with capitalization, “COLORED MAN, married, wants position as cook, hotel or restaurant. Will leave city. Can furnish A-1 ref”.¹⁰⁰ The lack of employment opportunities for blacks in Minnesota is evident in many of the ads. For example, “Chef, col., A-1, wants work, has hotel café & dining car experience. Can furnish 20 years' reference. Will consider any kitchen work”.¹⁰¹ Even with twenty years' experience, this chef “will consider any kitchen work”. White job seekers in the early 1930s would explicitly state their race, “First class, white male cook wishes position with hotel. Will go out of town. References furnished” or ethnicity “Chef-Working, Germ, American, good all around man. Satisfaction, references in & out of city”.¹⁰² The second ad is interesting, because not only does it reference whiteness by stating they are German, it emphasizes non-immigrant status with “American” and that they are currently employed. Even in the midst of the Great Depression, stigma against unemployment remains strong.

For whites, mentioning their race or ethnicity was utilizing their privileges to gain employment in a highly racially segregated employment market. As it became less socially acceptable to explicitly tell employers you were white or for employers to have that preference,

¹⁰⁰ “Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 10, 1936, sec. Classifieds;

“Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, September 13, 1936, sec. Classifieds.

¹⁰¹ “Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 10, 1935, sec. Classifieds.

¹⁰² “Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, November 18, 1934, sec. Classifieds; “Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, July 15, 1934, sec. Classifieds.

whites founded coded ways to reference their race, including mentioning union membership in “Waiter, age 32, exp, union member desires position” and hair color “Experienced waitress, age 27. blonde. needs work badly”.¹⁰³ For non-whites, there are several reasons why stating this in a classified ad was necessary. First, there weren’t many blacks in Minnesota. Employers assumed everyone applying was white—recall the ads specifically mentioning certain jobs were open to whites and blacks—and so to find the few jobs open to blacks, mentioning race was necessary for these applicants. Second, hotels hired blacks to create an atmosphere of luxury and the “good old southern days” where black slavery and servility was natural. By mentioning their race, blacks could place themselves in a narrative of blacks as good hotel workers because they were seen by whites as natural servants. Supporting this idea is that in several positions wanted ads, blacks describe themselves as “sober”, which could be a way to play off racist stereotypes and set themselves up as exceptions to those stereotypes.¹⁰⁴ Finally, because most unions excluded blacks, identifying as black also showed you’re not a union member until the late 1930s. By the late 1930s, few black men are placing classified ads that explicitly mention race. The number of ads by black women did not change in the years I surveyed.

The drop off in the number of help wanted and position wanted ads that explicitly mention whiteness is hard to explain. Ethnicity, union membership and hair color can be read as reference to whiteness but for many ads, it is much harder to draw a clear line. For example, this help wanted ad, “Waitress for new concern. Age 20-25. Complexion light. Ht 5'6' or 5'7'. Enclose snapshot. Ref”.¹⁰⁵ Many classified ads for women mention appearance or request

¹⁰³ Capitalization original. “Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, October 28, 1934, sec. Classifieds; “Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, March 22, 1936, sec. Classifieds; With the formation of Local 614, and Local 665, it is possible that mentioning union membership no longer was a coded reference to race by the late 1930s. See “Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, March 5, 1939, sec. Classifieds.

¹⁰⁴ “Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, December 2, 1934, sec. Classifieds.

¹⁰⁵ “Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, November 8, 1936, sec. Classifieds.

photographs. By mentioning both desiring a light complexion and requesting a photograph, we can assume this hotel wants white employees. For men, we see help wanted ads requesting “complete information about yourself”, the “ability to become a manager” and giving preference to “ex-service men”.¹⁰⁶ Any of those could be a reference to race. In the late 1930s, many hotels switch from placing their own ads to using Wilcken Employment Bureau, which only mentions race twice in the ads I surveyed.¹⁰⁷ A 1957 Minneapolis Fair Employment Practice Office report explains that employment agencies want to maintain their contracts with hotels and to avoid any risks, never send black applicants unless specifically requested by the employer.¹⁰⁸ HERE Local 458 advertises weekly starting in 1937 as a point of contact for businesses looking to hire waiters and cooks. Because Local 458 was an all-white union until the late 1940s, employers looking to hiring blacks could use Local 458 as a source for white workers.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

Section 1 provided a brief history of blacks in Minnesota, starting with Dredd Scott and early black settlers and ending with the increase violence in the 1920s and the organizations that formed in response. Minneapolis hotels in the 1850s catered to southern tourists who brought slaves on their vacations—connecting hotels, slavery and display of luxury back to the earliest days of the state. Section 2 examines how the Great Migration impacted Minnesota and why

¹⁰⁶ “Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, March 7, 1937, sec. Classifieds; “Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, April 9, 1939, sec. Classifieds.

¹⁰⁷ “Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 9, 1938, sec. Classifieds; “Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants,” June 19, 1938.

¹⁰⁸ The report includes restaurants and hotels. Because it does not breakdown employee source by size of employer, it is not possible to tell from the report if large hotels depend more on certain employee sources than small restaurants. Moersch, “Employment Opportunities for Non-Whites In Minneapolis Hotel and Restaurant Industry,” 14–16.

¹⁰⁹ The Philadelphia Fair Employment Practices Commission found that HERE Local 301 did not refer black workers to employers who did not specifically request them and HERE Local 115 filled job orders specifying race. F. Ray Marshall, *The Negro and Organized Labor* (New York: Wiley, 1965), 293.

migration to Minnesota was so much smaller than other Midwest cities like Chicago and Detroit. Only 9,445 blacks resided in the state in 1930, a mere 0.4% of the state population. The small population turned inward, creating elaborate social networks and exclusionary ideologies of racial uplift. Section 3 explains how important hotel employment was to blacks, especially in Minneapolis, with two-thirds of all blacks working in the city employed at hotels and clubs. Drawing from census records, I compare black hotel workers to the overall black population in Minnesota. The steady income, the symbolic distance from farm labor and the association with wealthy and white customers gave service jobs in luxury establishments a level of prestige.

Section 4, however, looks at how shifting white consumer tastes from racialized service to gendered service in the first few decades of the 1900s resulted in the replacement of many black workers with white workers. This replacement was exacerbated by increased job competition during the Depression and an increasingly powerful white labor movement that sought to prevent blacks from getting jobs. The number of black men working as waiters in Minneapolis dropped from 206 in 1930 to 106 in 1940. Section 5 analyzed the role of race in classified ads in the *Minneapolis Tribune*. The number of ads that explicitly mentioned whiteness dropped but the increase in other ways of screening out black applicants prevent a definitive conclusion.

The most critical factor for blacks in Minnesota was their small number. Particularly for younger blacks in Minneapolis, their personal and political aspirations were informed by these demographic realities. As the Great Migration and later the Great Depression overwhelmed black social-service organizations in Minnesota, the demands for larger structural changes grew. These larger community needs intersected with the individual motivations of a few college educated, migrant black service workers who sought to find a way to escape what felt like a

small and stifling community. This intersection of interests lead to the formation of Local 614 and Local 665. Returning to the story of Matthew Little from the introduction, waiting tables at the Curtis Hotel put Little on the path to president of the Minneapolis NAACP.

Chapter 4.

Miscellaneous Workers and a Jim Crow Local

The March 2, 1940 headline read “Waiters Win \$13,000 Raise” in massive letters across the front of the *Minneapolis Spokesman*. Declaring Local 614’s eighteen-month campaign to force the Curtis Hotel to abide by the 1938 contract a “smashing victory”, the *Twin Cities Herald* wrote that “the payment of a differential wage to Negro workers in this industry in Minneapolis [now] becomes a thing of the past”.¹ With the support of the Minneapolis Central Labor Union (CLU) and HERE’s local Executive Joint Board, the 1938 citywide hotel contract set equal wage rates for white and black hotel workers, eliminating the separate pay scale for black waiters in previous contracts.² When the Curtis Hotel refused to adhere to the contract and increase the pay of the black waiters, Local 614 took the contract violation to arbitration. The Curtis Hotel rejected the ruling by the Minnesota Labor Conciliator in favor of Local 614. Backed by the 16 unions representing Minneapolis hotel workers, Local 614 threatened to strike.³ Local 614’s support from white unions caught the Curtis Hotel off guard, Cassius explained: “That’s the only [thing] that saved us when we threatened to go out on strike. The Curtis Hotel, they didn’t mind us striking, but they were afraid for the milk. Brown [a Teamster leader and friend of Cassius] told them there’d be no deliveries of any kind by any trucks and that’s when they tucked their

¹ This is an increase of \$3000 per year per waiter in today’s money. “Curtis Hotel Waiters Union Sign Agreement Including \$3,500 Back Pay,” *Minneapolis Spokesperson*, March 1, 1940.

² Cooks, Waiters and Waitresses’ Union Local 458 et al., “Contract,” March 7, 1938, Curtis Hotel Records, Minnesota Historical Society; “Curtis Hotel Waiters Gain Victory,” *Twin-City Herald*, March 2, 1940; “Curtis Hotel Waiters Union Sign Agreement Including \$3,500 Back Pay”; Anthony Cassius to Roy Wier, March 8, 1940, Box 11, Central Labor Union of Minneapolis Archives. Minnesota Historical Society.

³ Anthony Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, interview by Carl Ross, December 1, 1981, 5, Minnesota Historical Society; “Minneapolis L.J.E.B. Gives Details on Curtis Hotel,” *The Catering Industry Employee* 49, no. 4 (April 1940): 53.

tails in and run”.⁴ With the threat of the strike, the Curtis Hotel caved overnight, agreeing to a \$13,000 increase in pay for black waiters—putting their wages on par with white waiters—and \$3,500 in back pay.⁵

Black newspapers nationwide praised Local 614 for its victory, including the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and Baltimore’s *Afro-American*.⁶ The *Minneapolis Spokesman* devoted an entire editorial to explaining the importance of the victory to black residents of the city.⁷ The official journal of HERE, *The Catering Industry Employee*, published a telegram outlining the victory, adding its own commentary that the settlement was “indicative of the fine spirit of solidarity and cooperation that exists between white and colored craftsmen in that city”.⁸ The publicity surrounding the victory, however, also revealed some of the tensions in the Minneapolis labor movement. The *Minneapolis Labor Review* buried initial coverage of the settlement at the end of a lengthy article summarizing a board meeting of the Minneapolis Central Labor Union. Rubin Latz, business agent for HERE Local 183, blamed Local 614 for the Curtis Hotel’s refusal follow the contract, claiming the “Negro’s Waiters’ union had consented to the cut under intimidation”.⁹

⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵ “Curtis Hotel Waiters Union Sign Agreement Including \$3,500 Back Pay”; “Curtis Hotel Waiters Gain Victory”; Douglas Hall, Curtis Hotel, and Local Joint Executive Board, “Agreement,” February 1940, Doug Hall’s Papers, Colored Waiters folder, Minnesota Historical Society; Douglas Hall, “Agreement,” February 26, 1940, Doug Hall’s Papers, Colored Waiters folder, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁶ “Curtis Hotel Waiters Union Sign Agreement Including \$3,500 Back Pay”; “Curtis Hotel Waiters Gain Victory”; “MINNEAPOLIS HOTEL WAITERS WIN PAY FIGHT: Secure Annual Increase Of \$13,000; Back Pay \$3,500,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 9, 1940; “Minn. Hotel Waiters Win Equal Wage Tilt,” *The Chicago Defender*, March 9, 1940; “Waiters, Union Wins Fight for Equal Salaries,” *Afro-American*, March 9, 1940; Herbert Howell, “Minnesota: Minneapolis, Minn.,” *The Chicago Defender*, March 16, 1940; “White Waiters Back Race In Hotel Pay Fight,” *The Chicago Defender*, March 2, 1940.

⁷ “Curtis Hotel, Its Waiters and the Community,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, March 1, 1940, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁸ Raymond Wright, “Minneapolis Colored Local Wins Impressive Settlement,” *The Catering Industry Employee* 49, no. 3 (March 1940): 10.

⁹ “Removal of Glotzbach and Stolte Urged,” *Minneapolis Labor Review*, March 1, 1940.

Not until March 29, weeks after the victory, does the *Minneapolis Labor Review* follow up—in an article titled “Hotel Joint Board Highly Commended”, conveniently ignoring the role of Local 614—by publishing several letters from national HERE officials. HERE Secretary-Treasurer Hugo Ernst bizarrely wrote:

Recall meeting the managers of this hotel when we had our Convention in your City. They appeared to be real business men in their dealings and we hope such good service will be rendered by our members to this hotel that there will be no regret on the part of the management that they entered into business relations with our Union.¹⁰

First, these “real business men” had just forced HERE into an eighteen month fight by deciding to ignore a contract they signed on the grounds it was unfair to the hotel to have to pay white and black workers equal wages. Second, calling into question the abilities of black waiters with the reference to “good service” is the same racist narrative hotel managers used to justify replacing black workers with white workers.¹¹ Third, the Curtis Hotel management never decided to enter into “business relations” with the union. Black waiters, fed up with being paid less than white waiters, decided to organize. With officials like Ernst and Latz in the same union, the success of locals like Local 614 and Local 665 could be quickly undermined. The Minneapolis labor movement in the 1930s and 1940s operated as a site of immense contradictions, excluding blacks while at the same time offering them the opportunity to achieve status and individuality by working in jobs that demanded servility to white customers.

The goal of this chapter is to give the context of union organizing by black hotel workers in Minnesota. Section 1 provides a brief summary of racism in HERE. Section 2 looks at a response by black workers to union racism: forming all-black unions. Section 3 examines how a

¹⁰ “Hotel Joint Board Highly Commended,” *Minneapolis Labor Review*, March 29, 1940.

¹¹ Joe William Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-45*, Blacks in the New World; Blacks in the New World. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 15.

certain subsection of black radicals advanced a narrow “class first” approach to race. Section 4 explains the failed initial attempts to organize black hotel worker in Minnesota. All these sections build up to Section 5, which gives a history of HERE Local 614 and Local 665, situating their formations within debates among workers, intellectuals and union officials over the role of black hotel workers in unions. The earlier failed organizing in Minneapolis, national debates within HERE about integration and Philip Randolph’s overly simplistic analysis of racism all informed the decisions by Local 614 and Local 665’s membership to organize. Finally, Section 6 examines these unions’ role in the early civil rights movement in Minnesota and how as black hotel workers increasingly gained political power, the priorities of these civil-rights organizations shifted to better address working-class needs.

Section 1: Hotel Unions and Racism

To begin, blacks were often excluded from unions. However, the specifics of this exclusion is very contradictory. For example, Charles James, a black cobbler, was elected president of the St. Paul Trade and Labor Assembly in 1900.¹² A decade later in 1911, American Federation of Labor (AFL) president Samuel Gompers gave a speech in Minneapolis. “I have stood as a champion of the colored man and have sacrificed self and much of the movement that the colored man should get a chance,” proclaimed Gompers. “But the Caucasians are not going to let their standard of living be destroyed by Negroes, China-men, Japs or any others.” Gompers was upset about strikebreaking by blacks. “If the colored man continues to lend himself to the work of tearing down everything that the White man has built up, a race hatred worse than any ever known will result,” said Gompers. “Caucasian civilization will serve notice that its uplifting

¹² Mary Lethert Wingerd, *Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 77.

process is not to be interfered with in any way”.¹³ In 1917, John Lind, chair of the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety, sent a frantic telegraph to the US Secretary of Labor, urging him to halt the migration of blacks to Minnesota due to their threat to white union dominance in the state.¹⁴ Switching tones again, in 1934, AFL president William Green wrote an appeal to blacks to join unions, published in the NAACP’s journal *Opportunity*, telling blacks unions offered the chance to “better yourself if you are ready to make the effort”. Yet Green then goes on to blame blacks for scabbing and undercutting white workers, creating what he calls “practical difficulties” in integrating unions.¹⁵

HERE was no different. At its 1901 convention, HERE leadership proposed the union integrate “at some time in the future” but declined to set a deadline.¹⁶ HERE amended their national constitution in an attempt to strike a compromise between admitting black members and not upsetting racist whites:

Section 19: If a member of a colored local moves to a city where no local of his craft or race exists, he shall remain a member of the local of the city from which he came.

Section 20: If a colored worker of our craft shall desire to enter a local in a city where only a white local exists, he may be accepted in the International Union as a member-at-large, provided he possesses the necessary qualifications.

Section 21: Candidates accepted under the above conditions shall be initiated by the local in the city where the candidate resides.

¹³ Charles Hallman and James L. Stroud Jr, “People of Color Demand to Share in Union Leadership,” *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, February 24, 2016, <http://spokesman-recorder.com/2016/02/24/people-color-demand-share-union-leadership/>.

¹⁴ John Lind Labor Committee Chairman, Minnesota Commission of Public Safety to US secretary of Labor, July 7, 1917, National Archives and Records Service Copies of Federal Documentation on Black Workers, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Cornell University Library.

¹⁵ William Green, “Negro Wage Earners and Trade Unions,” *Opportunity; Journal of Negro Life*, October 1934, 299.

¹⁶ Matthew Josephson, *Union House, Union Bar; the History of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union, AFL-CIO*. (New York: Random House, 1956), 36.

Section 96: Where there exists a white and (a) colored local in any city, they shall elect representatives to meet at least twice a year to equalize the scale of wages and conditions of employment of the craft.¹⁷

Overall, these additions to the constitution did little to improve conditions for non-white members, who, if they ever found themselves in a city with a segregated local, could only remain a member of a local where they did not live or become a “member-at-large” of the International Union—hardly strategies for building power. Some HERE locals were forced to violate the national constitution to admit black members.¹⁸ By 1928, HERE had only one thousand black members.¹⁹ Hardly improving its image among black workers, HERE spent much of the 1920s attempting to destroy the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP). At the 1929 AFL convention, HERE attempted to claim jurisdiction over Pullman porters and absorb the BSCP into HERE. The BSCP refused, arguing that “the men in control of that organization [HERE] desired to keep the colored man aside to himself” and had little interest in tolerating black leadership. The AFL chartered the BSCP as an official federation member but tensions between HERE and the BSCP continued for decades.²⁰

Overall, HERE adopted a strategy that when a marginalized group threatened union power, they were organized. White women and black workers at luxury hotels and high end restaurants were organized because white men realized the success of their unionization depended on unity of all workers. However, because tea rooms, cafeterias and lunch counters occupied a very different consumer markets and did not threaten to compete with white men,

¹⁷ National Urban League. Department of Research and Community Projects., *Negro Membership in American Labor Unions*, (New York,: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 37.

¹⁸ C.L. Dellums, California Afro-American Oral History Project, interview by Joyce Henderson, 1973, 51, California Afro-American Oral History Project Transcripts-Earl Warren Oral History Project, Schomburg Center for Black Culture, New York Public Libraries.

¹⁹ National Urban League. Department of Research and Community Projects., *Negro Membership in American Labor Unions*, 107.

²⁰ National Urban League. Department of Research and Community Projects., *Negro Membership in American Labor Unions*, 114.

those workers were left unorganized.²¹ Even in the more radical waitress locals, blacks remained excluded. White waitresses feared associating with black waitresses would lower the status they had so dearly fought for in the male dominated labor movement. Craft union traditions rely on social bonding and homogeneity and few older craft-based locals took steps against employer racism.

As explained in the introduction, the HERE's 1936 convention marked a turning point, moving to end the creation of segregated locals. At the 1938 convention of HERE, the delegates voted "unanimously" in response to "a demand from left-wing and progressive delegates" to change hotels after it refused to accommodate black attendees. In 1939, HERE voted to end segregated locals and called for all unions to "remove any bars that may interfere with acceptance of Negro membership". The *Catering Industry Employees* wrote "We fail to see the logic in unions barring their doors to Negro workers in their industry".²² However, convention resolutions did not always mean real change. The membership policies of the large mixed-industrial locals established in the 1930s, tied closely to progressive and inclusive traditions of the CIO, were more open to integration than older craft locals. It was these large new locals that took "pioneering stances" against racism and pushed HERE to join the early civil rights movement.²³

However, making integration a reality was a decade's long slog. In 1952, the New York chapter of the National Negro Labor Council (NNLC) launched a campaign to end racist hiring practices in New York hotels. Of the 16 biggest New York hotels, only 903 of the 14,000

²¹ Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 105.

²² Philip Sheldon Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619-1981*, 2nd ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1982), 234.

²³ Cobble, *Dishing It out*, 124.

employees were black. Fewer than 3% of the waiters were black—a trade blacks had previously monopolized only a few decades before—and of the 800 bartenders in 94 downtown hotels, none were black. HERE announced its support in 1953, declaring the slogan of its New York locals was “no discrimination” but as Foner points out, HERE did nothing to enact that slogan until the NNLC started a campaign.²⁴ Few blacks got jobs as waiters or bellhops in New York even into the 1960s.²⁵ As late as 1958, HERE Local 556 in St. Paul resisted integration.²⁶

Section 2: All-Black Locals and Independent Unions

In studying the history of black unionism, it is important to note that there is a rich tradition of independent black labor organizations. Contrary to the beliefs of white union leaders, blacks were less averse to unionization than to second-class status within organizations that purported to represent the interests of all members. As a result, when whites refused to allow blacks to join white unions, blacks formed their own.²⁷ In 1850, the American League of Colored Laborers was organized in New York City and in 1858 the Association of Black Caulkers in Baltimore was founded. During Reconstruction, black longshore workers, butchers, bricklayers, ship caulkers, and hod carriers formed all-black unions. In 1869, the Colored National Labor Union was formed under the leadership of Isaac Meyers, a ship caulker in Baltimore—later succeeded as president of the federation by Frederick Douglas. State

²⁴ Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619-1981*, 302.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 338.

²⁶ Ed S. Miller to Lorraine Lewis, March 6, 1958, Hotel Employee and Restaurant Employee National Papers, Joint Executive Board Files, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Cornell University Library.; Ed S. Miller to Robert L. Morgan, April 10, 1958, Hotel Employee and Restaurant Employee National Papers, Joint Executive Board Files, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Cornell University Library.; Robert L. Morgan to Ed S. Miller, April 9, 1958, Hotel Employee and Restaurant Employee National Papers, Joint Executive Board Files, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Cornell University Library.

²⁷ Jacqueline Jones, *American Work: Four Centuries of Black and White Labor* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 328.

conventions of black workers were held as early as 1869 in Georgia and South Carolina. However, many of these organizations lacked the size to endure decades of attack by white unions and collapsed during the post-Reconstruction period under combined assault by employers and the newly formed AFL.²⁸ Most black unions were too small to prosper or even survive for an extended period of time but at least their members could concentrate on battling employers alone and not fellow white unionists.²⁹

The most significant all-black union was the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP). In August 1925, 500 disgruntled Pullman porters met in New York City and asked A. Philip Randolph, a prominent black socialist and labor organizer, to help them form a union. Quickly successful in New York, the BSCP faced a serious challenge in organizing in Chicago, headquarters of the Pullman Company, where middle-class black leaders who controlled the black press, the pulpit and public opinion had little faith in unions. For example, the 1925 convention of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) passed a resolution opposing black membership in the AFL. Chicago Bishop Archibald J. Carey instructed AME ministers they had a responsibility to caution their membership against joining unions. The Improved and Benevolent Order of Elks of the World at their 1925 convention in Richmond, Virginia, passed a resolution condemning organized labor and calling on blacks to trust their employers. The resolution urged blacks to “line up with the best elements of American citizenship, which in the final analysis all over the country constitute the large employers of labor” and then went on to instruct leadership to “discredit and discourage all forms of unionism and economic radicalism

²⁸ Herbert Hill, *Black Labor, the NLRB, and the Developing Law of Equal Employment Opportunity*, Reprint / Industrial Relations Research Institute ; No. 190; Reprint (University of Wisconsin--Madison. Industrial Relations Research Institute) ; No. 190. ([Madison, Wis.]: University of Wisconsin--Madison, Industrial Relations Research Institute, 1975), 208.

²⁹ Jones, *American Work*, 328.

presented to us by white labor agitators and their tools”.³⁰ It took years of organizing by the BSCP to overcome this intense opposition.

The BSCP won a charter from the AFL in 1935 and became a national advocate for the rights of black union members and leader in the civil rights movement.³¹ By 1937, the BSCP had crushed the Pullman company union, won its first contract and achieved a historic shift in the changing the anti-union perspectives of the black leadership class. Membership boomed from only 658 porters in 1933 to over 15,000 in the 1940s.³² As these new union members crisscrossed the country, porters spread the message of unions, acting as “mediators of an expanding black working class politics, identifying better wages, and better working conditions and opportunities, as portals of full black citizenships”.³³

All-black locals in white dominated unions played a similar role. Diane Dolores Turner, in a dissertation on all-black Local 274 of the American Federation of Musicians, Philadelphia, argued that all-black locals represented a grassroots effort to participate in the labor movement.³⁴

³⁰ William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925-37*, Blacks in the New World; Blacks in the New World. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 20; “Bishop Carey Warns Against AFL Unions,” *Argus*, October 23, 1925.

³¹ For a history of the BSCP in Minnesota, see Arthur C. McWatt, “‘A Greater Victory’: The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in St. Paul,” *Minnesota History* 55, no. 5 (April 1, 1997): 202–16.

³² Beth Tompkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 5–9; Brailsford Reese Brazeal, *The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters: Its Origin and Development* (Harper & brothers, 1946); Melinda Chateauvert, *Marching Together: Women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters*, *The Working Class in American History*; *Women in American History*; *Working Class in American History*; *Women in American History*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); David M Colman, “On the Right Track: The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the Dining Car Employees’ Union Local 516, and the Ladies’ Auxilliary to the BSCP, Black Labor Organizing in St. Paul 1937-1950” 1992; David D. Perata, *Those Pullman Blues: An Oral History of the African American Railroad Attendant*, Twayne’s Oral History Series ; No. 22; Twayne’s Oral History Series ; No. 22. (New York: Twayne Publishers ;, 1996); Jack. Santino, *Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: Stories of Black Pullman Porters*, Publications of the American Folklore Society. New Series; Publications of the American Folklore Society. New Series (Unnumbered) (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

³³ Clarence. Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-75*, *Class, Culture*; *Class, Culture*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 35, ebrary <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10389772>.

³⁴ Diane Delores. Turner, “Organizing and Improvising: A History of Philadelphia’s Black Musicians’ Protective Union Local 274, American Federation of Musicians” (Temple University, 1993), 269, Schomburg Center for Black Culture, New York Public Libraries.

By the 1920s, there was a significant increase in the formation of independent organizations of black workers, a clear example of self-determination in response to union racism. Turner writes, “The chief reason for the development of these independent Negro labor unions are that it is felt that Negro labor is not receiving a square deal at the hands of white labor...”³⁵ Creating separate locals was not merely a product of nor a reaction to the discrimination of white workers.³⁶ Just as waitresses locals could better address their unique concerns and have women leadership, all-black locals could better black concerns and have black leadership.³⁷ At the same time, as HERE debated between craft unionism and industrial unionism, the continued exclusion of black workers from craft locals could have pushed the tide in favor of larger, merged locals. From outside perspectives, however, all-black locals were seen as problems needing resolution through merging, with even Nellie Stone Johnson and George Naumoff mentioning their reluctance to merge in their oral histories.³⁸

Clair Drake and Horace Cayton in *Black Metropolis* provide an interesting example of the challenges facing all-black unions. Red Cap porters worked in train stations, carrying bags from the trains to waiting taxis. Most were black. Racial tensions in integrated Red Cap unions were amplified by the differences in educational levels between white and black Red Caps. An official in one local explained that 72 of 90 black Red Caps had attended at least some college, while most white Red Caps had never been to high school. A black union official explained,

³⁵ Ibid., 33.

³⁶ For an excellent analysis of how earlier labor historians reduced black workers to perpetual victims of racist white workers and neglected black agency, see Howard Kimeldorf and Robert Penney, “‘Excluded’ by Choice: Dynamics of Interracial Unionism on the Philadelphia Waterfront 1910-1930,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 51 (April 1, 1997): 50–71.

³⁷ Cobble, *Dishing It out*, 62–63.

³⁸ George Naumoff, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with George Naumoff, interview by Carl Ross, August 8, 1981, 27, Minnesota Historical Society; Nellie Stone Johnson, Minnesota Black History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, interview by David Taylor, July 15, 1975, 9, Minnesota Historical Society.

“The Negroes in our union are the best informed on parliamentary procedure. Whites lacks this knowledge because the economic condition of the white man doesn’t usually make for an educated man becoming a Red Cap. The educational status of the whites in the union is lower than that of the Negroes”. A black union president in 1937 elaborated:

Personally, I think the condition of the white Red Cap is worse than that of the Negroes. The Negro takes pride in his job and feels no ‘let-down’ because he is performing what is considered ‘menial labor’, whereas the white considers himself above such ‘menial’ labor; and thus when they are forced into this occupation, they feel they are working under pressure. They [the white Red Caps] make little effort to *dignify their jobs*. The average Negro Red Cap stays in service a lifetime, because it is fairly lucrative and a fairly steady occupation, and for some it ‘gets’ you. Come down some time and wear a uniform and a cap for a week, and you’ll understand what I mean. We Red Caps actually take great pride in our work and *have brought more dignity to it than you probably think*.

For these types of service jobs, an educated black did not face stigma or lower social status from community for working there. White workers, on the other hand, felt insecure and defensive about working alongside blacks and most quickly left the profession.³⁹

Within HERE, all-black locals had mixed success. In Minnesota, many locals quickly formed and this disappeared, including Local 634 in Minneapolis in 1912 and Local 603 in St. Paul in 1934, both receiving a single newspaper mention and then never again.⁴⁰ In Chicago, the Waiters Local 356 and the Bartenders and Cooks Local 444, both all-black locals, achieved significant victories. The San Francisco *Labor Clarion* praised their “novel methods” to resist replacement by white women by—instead of the traditional pickets—filled every seat in the restaurant with their members to prevent customers from eating.⁴¹ A 1969 book by the A. Philip Randolph Institute on the role of blacks in the Chicago labor movement explained the leaders of

³⁹ Emphasis original. St. Clair Drake and Horace R Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 239–242.

⁴⁰ “Colored Waiters Union Now An Active Force,” *Minneapolis Labor Review*, April 5, 1912; “[Local 603],” *Twin City Herald*, March 31, 1934.

⁴¹ “Novel Method of Colored Waiters,” *San Francisco Labor Clarion*, May 22, 1903, 11.

Local 356 and Local 444 gaining “recognition and respect” for their organizing.⁴² Despite this success, black waitresses were excluded from Local 444, highlighting the gendered respectability these unionists promoted to maintain their precarious status.⁴³ In New York, a Negro Hotel Workers Council coordinated organizing, civil rights activism and social activities between all-black locals and the integrated Local 6.⁴⁴

In other cities, the creation of all-black locals lead to backlash from white HERE members. B.D. Amis was a communist National Negro Congress leader and field organizer for the Steel Worker Organizing Committee.⁴⁵ In 1939, Amis helped black hotel workers in Philadelphia organize Colored Catering Industry Workers Local 758, affiliated with HERE, winning significant wage increases for its 300 members.⁴⁶ Amis, secretary-treasurer of Local 758, described it as a “credit to the labor movement and the Negro people”.⁴⁷ Discussed in further depth in Chapter 5, Amis advocated a narrow view of racism, writing “An extensive enlightenment and agitational campaign must be conducted among that section of backward white workers in the south who are corrupted with white ‘boss’ race ideology, to win them to support the struggle of the Negro masses”.⁴⁸ Describing black workers skeptical of unions as

⁴² A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund., *Negro Pioneers in the Chicago Labor Movement*. (Chicago: A. Philip Randolph Institute, 1969).

⁴³ Ava. Baron, *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 224–225, Table of contents <http://www.gbv.de/dms/hbz/toc/ht004193756.PDF>.

⁴⁴ Negro Hotel Workers Council, “Mass Meeting: Call for Negro Hotel Workers,” 1939, WAG.148 Box 13, Tamiment Library and Wagner Archives; “An Open Letter to Negro Workers in Hotels,” 1939, WAG.148 Box 13, Tamiment Library and Wagner Archives; “Job March Must Get Action, Says Negro Leader,” *Daily Worker*, June 23, 1941; The Negro Council of the Hotel and Club Employees Union Local 6, “Second Annual Dance and Entertainment,” unknown, WAG.148 Box 13, Tamiment Library and Wagner Archives.

⁴⁵ Barry D. Amis, “B.D. Amis: Black Communist & Labor Leader,” *People’s World*, November 19, 2004, <http://www.peoplesworld.org/b-d-amis-black-communist-and-labor-leader/>; John W. Edelman to To Whom It May Concern, December 3, 1938.

⁴⁶ B.D. Amis, “Two Years After Local 758,” May 8, 1939, TAM 132 Box 1, Tamiment Library and Wagner Archives; Joseph Woods, “Catering Firm Picketed by Unionists,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 29, 1940, Tamiment Library and Wagner Archives, B.D. Amis Papers; “Start Drive to Oust Race from Philly Catering Work,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 20, 1942, Tamiment Library and Wagner Archives, B.D. Amis Papers.

⁴⁷ B.D. Amis, “American Federation of Labor to Organize All Employees in the Hotel, Restaurant and Catering Industry,” undated, TAM 132 Box 1, Tamiment Library and Wagner Archives.

⁴⁸ B.D. Amis, “Lynch Justice at Work,” unknown, 8, Tamiment Library and Wagner Archives, B.D. Amis Papers.

“backwards”, Amis admitted unions had excluded blacks previously but explained that black workers “cannot permit these mistakes to hinder our progress today”.⁴⁹ Amis overestimated his ability to convince white unionists of their economic interest in supporting Local 758 when he resisted replacement of black union members with white workers. In 1942, members of the all-white HERE Local 568 broke into Local 758’s headquarters with crowbars and sledgehammers, destroying records and telephones. National HERE officials ousted Amis and transferred the task of representing the black members to Local 568’s staff.⁵⁰ The destruction of Local 758—in which national HERE leadership was complicit—show a sharp limitation of the autonomy of all-black locals in HERE.

Section 3: Labor’s Alarm Clock

In the 1920s, the BSCP and its publications, first *The Messenger* and later *The Black Worker*, emphasized the economic roots of racism. In *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, Cornelius Bynum argues that Randolph and his staff viewed themselves as “labor’s alarm clock”, attempting to wake up the white labor movement so black and white workers could unite against their common enemy, capitalism. *The Messenger* regularly promoted interracial class solidarity, stressing that black and white workers shared a common interest in their demands for better wages, shorter hours and improved working conditions. Until workers put aside their irrational racial differences and acknowledged their mutual class interests, they would never fully succeed in their struggle against capitalism.⁵¹ Most importantly, Randolph initially

⁴⁹ B.D. Amis, “Union Explains Method and Purpose of Organizational Drive,” undated, TAM 132 Box 1, Tamiment Library and Wagner Archives; B.D. Amis, “The AF of L Union Fights for Jobs for Colored Workers,” undated, TAM 132 Box 1, Tamiment Library and Wagner Archives.

⁵⁰ “Union Blow at Caterers Protested,” *Unknown*, circa 1942, Philadelphia edition, Tamiment Library and Wagner Archives, B.D. Amis Papers; “Start Drive to Oust Race from Philly Catering Work.”

⁵¹ Cornelius L. Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, The New Black Studies Series; New Black Studies. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 102–105.

never considered the organization of all-black unions as a goal. Rather, Bynum argues, Randolph viewed the BSCP as “one key step in the process of drawing black workers more deeply into the American labor movement”.⁵² To achieve this, the early BSCP emphasized the common interest of black and white workers and downplayed, for the most part, the long history of racism in the white labor movement. While never hesitant to criticize the AFL, the BSCP routinely asserted “even the southern working man will change” his racist views when educated on his the importance of interracial class solidarity.⁵³ In Chapter 5, I will discuss in length the connection between “successful” black leadership and this “class first” analysis of racism.

However, as the impact of the Great Depression grew, Randolph discovered that in the corporate boardroom and on the shop floor, race still mattered more than class—severely limiting the effectiveness of his earlier strict class theory. This realization forced the BSCP to revise their views and insist that black workers simultaneously advance both class and racial needs.⁵⁴ The challenges facing black workers were highly unique to their position and required particular tactics. Furthermore, Randolph came to believe that even if black and white workers shared class interests, even the most “honest white American who believes in Negroes rising” expected “Negroes to spearhead their own” and that addressing racist “is the Negro’s problem and he has got to pay for it”.⁵⁵ Even as white unions slowly began to pay lip service to racial equality, continuing hostility in the AFL demonstrated that it was the BSCP’s task alone of “not only fighting the battles of the sleeping car porters but for black workers throughout the entire

⁵² Ibid., 105.

⁵³ Ibid., 107–108.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 120.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 127.

nation”.⁵⁶ Class conscious was insufficient to overcome entrenched racism by employers and white workers.

The 1930s marked the beginning of black-labor alliances, with the massive growth of black union membership and shift in focus of existing civil-rights organizations to working-class concerns—to many black leaders, this movement seemed to represent the coming of a new era. Black radicals, having set themselves upon the task of initiating the alliance with labor, struggled to determine what that alliance would look like. In May 1935, at the National Negro Congress (NNC)’s founding convention, Arnold Hill of the National Urban League declared that if blacks “maintained a faith of organizing black workers sufficient strength can be gathered to join [the] forces of white labor”. Randolph expanded, arguing “black workers not only must organize themselves but what is as important, they must pay the price in suffering, sacrifice and struggle [because only] economic power [would bring about the larger goal] of industrial and political democracy”.⁵⁷ The NNC, while most remembered for its success in organizing black steelworkers in the Midwest, also supported thousands of black hotel workers joining HERE in Washington D.C.⁵⁸ However, while the NNC delivered on their end of the bargain by organizing thousands of workers, unions did not reciprocate with a strong endorsement of civil rights.⁵⁹ In the end, these alliances became trapped in a relationship defined by blacks’ unqualified support

⁵⁶ Ibid., 129–139.

⁵⁷ Erik S Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress and the Rise of Militant Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 1–2.

⁵⁸ None of the 1936 NNC delegates were connected to Minnesota hotel union organizing, although Randolph did speak at events hosted by Local 614. United States. Congress. House. Committee on Labor., *Proposed Amendments to the National Labor Relations Act: Hearings before the Committee on Labor, House of Representatives, Seventy-Sixth Congress, First Session, (eight Volumes). June 29, 30, and July 5, 1939.* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1939), 1461.

⁵⁹ Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow*, 59.

for labor and labor's token support for such mild reformist measures such as the anti-lynching bill and the Fair Employment Practices Commission.⁶⁰

Section 4: Initial Attempts to Organize Black Hotel Workers in Minneapolis

HERE chartered its first local in Minnesota in 1890.⁶¹ As discussed in Chapter 3, hotels were a major employer of blacks in Minnesota. The importance of black hotel workers was not unnoticed by HERE. Several attempts were made to organize black hotel waiters in Minneapolis.⁶² In 1918 approximately 120 black waiters—including 30 from the Curtis Hotel—formed a union and won a few minor concessions relating to meals, hours and rest but no wage increases. It collapsed after a year. In an interview, Leslie Sinton, business agent of the Northwest Cooks Association, a predecessor to Local 458 that prohibited non-white and non-citizen members, blamed the failure of the organization on, "...the colored waiters' apathy to unionism and the venality of their leaders" and explained that the waiters had only been organized, "...to secure patronage of the national labor convention".⁶³ Black waiters were again organized in 1923. This time the union had only 40 to 60 members and lasted less than a year. Harris and Carter write that this second failure "...was said [by white HERE officials] to have

⁶⁰ Keith P. Griffler, "The Black Radical Intellectual and the Black Worker: The Emergence of a Program for Black Labor, 1918-1938" (Ohio State University, 1993), 25–26, Schomburg Center for Black Culture, New York Public Libraries.

⁶¹ Hotel and Restaurant Employees' International Alliance and Bartenders' International League of America., *A Brief History of Our Union* (Cincinnati: The Union, 1941), 2.

⁶² Literally, they tried constantly. "[St. Paul Colored Waiters]," *Appeal*, June 28, 1890; "Kovelski Organizing Well," *Minneapolis Labor Review*, March 25, 1909; "TRADES AND LABOR ASSEMBLY HOLDS SEMI-ANNUAL ELECTION," *Minneapolis Labor Review*, July 22, 1909; "Established Local Headquarters," *Minneapolis Labor Review*, October 21, 1909; "Organizer Gorton Here," *Minneapolis Labor Review*, December 1, 1911; "Colored Waiters Union Now An Active Force."

⁶³ Abram Lincoln Harris and Elmer Anderson Carter, *The Negro Population in Minneapolis; a Study of Race Relations*, (Minneapolis: Urban League and Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House, 1926), 40–41; Hotel and Restaurant Employees' International Alliance and Bartenders' International League of America., *A Brief History of Our Union*, 26; Northwest Cooks Association, *Northwest Cooks Association Incorporated Bylaws 1919*, 1919.

been due to the efforts the waiters' leaders to form a social club".⁶⁴ J. E. Spielman of the Bookbinders' Local 12 reflected on his experience in 1923 organizing black Minneapolis waiters:

1. [The Negro workers] depend too much on leadership which our experience has proven of a questionable type;
2. They are too timid and distrustful of white officers for assistance to organization;
3. [They have a] fear of losing the job on account of color;
4. The [Negro] emissary of employers instills them with fear that colored workers will be replaced with whites if they attempt to organize;
5. [There is] a lack of education along trade union lines, hence lack stability.⁶⁵

In both attempts blacks were "organized" by white organizers—the decision to organize was not made by blacks—but both failures were blamed on blacks. The few blacks in unions often had no say in leadership, Cassius explained: "So here they sit in a little isolated black group... [They'd] meet, pay dues and give it to the white man and get nothing. When the white people got a raise, they didn't".⁶⁶ Black distrust of white organizers and apathy toward white unions is unsurprising.

Harris and Carter describe multiple union officials who in the same sentence refuse to permit black members and then express frustration at black skepticism of the benefits of labor unions. White unionists in Minneapolis were willing do everything possible to assist black waiters in organizing except integrate their own locals.⁶⁷ After denying Cassius membership in Local 458, Leslie Sinton offered to help him organize a separate union because "he didn't think it's right that I [Cassius] should be paid seventeen dollars a month to work and the white man

⁶⁴ Harris and Carter, *The Negro Population in Minneapolis; a Study of Race Relations*, 41.

⁶⁵ Sterling D Spero and Abram Lincoln Harris, *The Black Worker; the Negro and the Labor Movement*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 74. Brackets original from Spero and Harris.

⁶⁶ Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, 21.

⁶⁷ Harris and Carter, *The Negro Population in Minneapolis; a Study of Race Relations*, 38-41.

[got] seventy-five dollars a month to do the same work”.⁶⁸ Sinton apparently saw no contradiction in opposing discriminatory pay, sitting on the board of the Minneapolis Urban League and attending a banquet for Philip Randolph yet denied Cassius membership.⁶⁹

A 1926 survey of 47 unions in Minneapolis revealed that seven had constitutions that prohibited black members and of the remaining forty, only eight actually had black members. In the entire Minneapolis labor movement, only 29 union members were black.⁷⁰ Ryder’s 1931 survey paints a grim picture as economic depression sets in, writing that, “Membership in labor unions among colored workers is almost negligible. There are only two firms [in St. Paul] in which it is stated that Negro workers are union members or have to be treated according to labor union standards”.⁷¹ The 1945 report by the Governor’s Interracial Commission shows these trends continued long into an era of supposedly racially progressive unionism. Of the 109 unions responding, ten now reported blacks held leadership positions but blacks still accounted for only 646 union members, compared to 54,334 whites.⁷² Even the progressive Central Labor Union of Minneapolis, an instrumental supporter of Local 614, denied black members of building trades unions per capita representation in its leadership.⁷³

Every organized black worker represented a threat to whites, not only because of their ability to organize for higher wages and better working conditions but also because of the claim to equality inherent in unionism. Spero and Harris summarize: “To the white trade unionist the

⁶⁸ Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, 6.

⁶⁹ “Waiters’ Local Hosts Banquet for Porters’ Union Leader,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, November 30, 1934; C. Curry, “Minneapolis Urban League 1939 14th Annual Report,” 1939.

⁷⁰ Harris and Carter, *The Negro Population in Minneapolis; a Study of Race Relations*, 37.

⁷¹ Walter Ryder, “The Negro in St. Paul,” *Opportunity; Journal of Negro Life*, June 1931, 170.

⁷² Only 109 of the 450 Minnesota unions responded, which to the commission attributed both prejudice and indifference. Governor’s Interracial Commission, *The Negro Worker in Minnesota, a Report to Governor Edward J. Thye of Minnesota* (St. Paul, 1945), 38. O

⁷³ Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, 39.

Negro is not merely an outsider trying to get into the union, but a social and racial inferior trying to force the white man to associate with him as an equal. And the Negro knows that the white worker wants to keep him out of the union not merely as a potential competitor but as a member of a race which must not be permitted to rise to the white man's level".⁷⁴ This exclusion took multiple forms. An anecdote from the Minneapolis Urban League included in the Governor's Interracial Commission's report describes a black bartender who, applying to join the Bartenders' Union, was assured membership over the phone. Upon seeing him, the Bartenders' Union's business agent told him blacks were not accepted as members. After the Urban League complained, the business agent told the black bartender to find employment first and then he would be granted membership. This became an impossible catch, because bars only hired union referred bartenders.⁷⁵ This incident occurred in 1940, when Cassius was president of the HERE Local Joint Board, which the Bartenders Union reported to and four years after HERE prohibited racial discrimination among its locals.⁷⁶

Other more subtle forms of racism persisted as well. Local 614, in collaboration with the Minneapolis Urban League, established training courses for black waiters, which the goal of the *Minneapolis Spokesperson* described as, "...designed to meet the demand for better trained waiters in Twin Cities' hotels and equip more local young men to qualify for dining-car service".⁷⁷ Several years later this effort was replicated in St. Paul by HERE Local 556 and the St. Paul Urban League. Local 556 business representative Leonard Johnson described the effort

⁷⁴ Spero and Harris, *The Black Worker; the Negro and the Labor Movement*, 462.

⁷⁵ Governor's Interracial Commission, *The Negro Worker in Minnesota, a Report to Governor Edward J. Thye of Minnesota*, 34. The report does not specify local. To my knowledge the only bartender union in Minneapolis was Local 152, an affiliate of HERE.

⁷⁶ Josephson, *Union House, Union Bar; the History of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union, AFL-CIO.*, 226–227; Cassius, *Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius*, 31.

⁷⁷ "Waiters School Is Mpls. Urban League Project," *Minneapolis Spokesperson*, March 4, 1938.

to the *Union Advocate* to be "...for the training [of] colored waiters in all the branches of serving the public equally as efficiently as their white brothers".⁷⁸ The difference in rhetoric of the *Minneapolis Spokesperson* and the *Union Advocate* is revealing of the opinion of whites unionists toward black waiters as less efficient than whites. Union racism, varying from constitutional bans of black members to individual prejudices by business agents, kept most blacks in Minnesota out of unions.

Section 5: The History of Local 614 and Local 665

When Anthony Cassius, a black waiter at the Curtis Hotel in downtown Minneapolis, decided to organize a union in 1930, he first tried to join the Cooks and Waiters Local 458, an affiliate of HERE. Refused, Cassius organized the all-black Hotel and Restaurant Waiters' Union Local 614.⁷⁹ Local 614 quickly organized waiters at the Curtis Hotel, Nicollet Hotel and St. Paul Hotel, growing to a membership of approximately 100.⁸⁰ The extent of Local 614's activity in these early years is difficult to track. The first president of Local 614 was Samuel Harris, followed by Albert Raglin, Anthony Cassius, Robert Mallory, James Robinson and finally Merton Ewing as the last president.⁸¹ The leadership of Local 614 was under constant

⁷⁸ "Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union Sponsors School for Waiters," *St. Paul Union Advocate*, January 26, 1939. Unclear if this is Local 553 or Local 556.

⁷⁹ The accuracy of 1930 is unclear. Cassius said 1930 in his interview, Minneapolis newspapers mention Local 614 first in 1934, and *Minneapolis Labor Review* and HERE records don't list Local 614 until 1934. Interestingly, Nellie Stone Johnson in her oral history said the decision to have an all-black local was "done primarily on their own". Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, 6; "Report of the Secretary-Treasurer-Continued," *The Catering Industry Employee* 43, no. 3 (March 1934): 12; "Colored Waiters Organize Union," *Minneapolis Labor Review*, March 9, 1934; Johnson, Minnesota Black History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, 9.

⁸⁰ "Nicollet Hotel Engages Waiters for New Cafe," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, September 25, 1936; Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, 3-4; "Waiters Union Wins Fight," *Twin-City Herald*, October 8, 1938.

⁸¹ Leonard W. Johnson to Donald C. Peterson and Raymond Wright, May 2, 1947, Lloyd M. MacAloon's Papers, Minnesota Historical Society; Lloyd MacAloon to Robert Mallory and Colored Waiters Union, November 29, 1941, Lloyd M. MacAloon's Papers, Minnesota Historical Society; "Cassius Made President of Cooks and Waiters Union," *Twin-City Herald*, March 4, 1939, Minnesota Historical Society; James A. Robinson and George Naumoff

attack by the Curtis Hotel because they disrupted the racialized expectations of servility and invisibility. Robert Mallory, Anthony Cassius and Merton Ewing were all fired at various occasions and had to fight to win their jobs back.⁸² For members of Local 614, life was defined by their community presence, not their day job. The time outside of work, be it union organizing or hanging out at Cassius' bar, was about making meaning of their life in order to resist the impact of having to spend every day, all day performing plantation culture to fulfill a slavery fantasy of white customers. Bargaining over wages, hours and workplace regulations allowed black hotel workers to assert their dignity. Local 614 members rejected stereotypes of servility in favor a new image of the militant urban black working man.

While Local 614 reported at the 1936 HERE convention it had went on strike 6 times in the last two years, no news coverage of these strikes can be found.⁸³ In 1937, Local 614 pressured the Nicollet Hotel to hire 60 black waiters at the highest wages ever received by black hotel workers in Minneapolis, a feat the *Chicago Defender* “without doubt the greatest accomplishment by a Race group in the Twin Cities in the last 11 years”.⁸⁴ This success was short lived and after six weeks, the Nicollet fired the black waiters, which the *Minneapolis Spokesman* suggested was the work of Local 458.⁸⁵ In 1938, Local 614 fought off an attempt by the St. Paul Hotel to replace its black waiters with white workers by rallying guests to refuse

to A.J. Kilday, November 12, 1941, Central Labor Union of Minneapolis, Box 11, Minnesota Historical Society; “Waiters’ Local Hosts Banquet for Porters’ Union Leader”; “Local 614,” *Twin City Herald*, October 3, 1936.

⁸² Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, 22; “Hotel Fires, Union Hires,” *Twin-City Herald*, May 28, 1938; Anthony Cassius to Lloyd M MacAloon, December 2, 1941, Lloyd M. MacAloon’s Papers, Minnesota Historical Society; Johnson to Peterson and Wright, May 2, 1947.

⁸³ It appears Local 614 exaggerated these numbers or misunderstood the question. It reports these strikes involved 4000 workers, more than 4 times the second largest strike by HERE during that same timeframe and larger than the total HERE membership in Minnesota. “Convention Proceedings,” *The Catering Industry Employee* 45, no. 9 (September 1936).

⁸⁴ It is unclear what happened in 1925. “Nicollet Hotel Engages Waiters for New Cafe”; “Local 614”; “Race Waiters Win In Minneapolis,” *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967)*, October 3, 1936.

⁸⁵ Local 458 was the only other waiters union in Minneapolis. “Nicollet Hotel Discharges Race Waiter Crew,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, November 13, 1936.

service by the new white waiters.⁸⁶ In June 1941, Local 614 joined Local 665 and Local 458 in striking 13 hotels in Minneapolis. The hotels locked the workers out, requiring an intervention by the state of Minnesota.⁸⁷

Local 614 was involved with a variety of community functions, including organizing a school for black waiters with the Minneapolis Urban League, hosting picnics and a dance that required the “biggest dance floor in Minneapolis”, provided leadership to the Minnesota Negro Council’s Industrial Commission and the Negro Worker Council and advocated at hearings on cost of living adjustments.⁸⁸ Local 614 hosted Phillip Randolph of the BSCP, with 100 members packing the banquet to hear him speak. Local 614 President Samuel Harris, then secretary-treasurer of Local 614 Anthony Cassius, *Minneapolis Spokesman* Cecil Newman, Local 458 organizer Leslie Sinton and Local 516 president Frank Boyd sat at the table of honor with Randolph. Edward Hayes, who had performed at the 1934 HERE convention in Minneapolis, provided the entertainment.⁸⁹ While Local 614 only existed because of racist exclusion by Local 458, it won important victories for its members. Local 614 existed simultaneously as a site of struggle for inclusion, access and influence, acting both, as Ross describes, a “Jim Crow local”

⁸⁶ “Waiters Union Wins Fight.”

⁸⁷ Alfred Neuman to Alfred P. Blair, June 3, 1941, Lloyd M. MacAloon’s Papers, Minnesota Historical Society; Llyod M. MacAloon to Alfred P. Blair, “Employers’ Lockout Notice to State Labor Conciliator and Unions Representing Employees of the Employers,” June 5, 1941, Lloyd M. MacAloon’s Papers, Minnesota Historical Society; Alfred Deltz, Walter Smith, and David Jones, “Report of Commission: Local Joint Executive Board of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Alliance and Bartenders International League of America and Minneapolis Hotel Association” (Division of Conciliation, State of Minnesota, July 8, 1941), Doug Hall’s Papers, Local Joint Executive Board of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Alliance folder, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁸⁸ Minneapolis Urban League, “13th Annual Report of the Minneapolis Urban League,” 1937, F613.M9 N4613, Minnesota Historical Society; “Waiters School Is Mpls. Urban League Project”; “Minnesota Waiters Frolic at Picnic,” *The Chicago Defender*, August 5, 1933; “Waiters’ Union Dance Monday Night,” *Twin City Herald*, April 28, 1934; “The Minnesota Negro Council,” *Twin-City Herald*, February 2, 1938; Herbert Howell, “Minnesota: Minneapolis,” *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967)*, March 23, 1940; “Cost Of Living Meet Tonight At 8:00 P.M.,” *Minneapolis Labor Review*, August 15, 1941.

⁸⁹ “Randolph Guest of Waiters’ Union 614,” *Minneapolis Labor Review*, November 30, 1934; “Waiters’ Local Hosts Banquet for Porters’ Union Leader.”

and yet also the first step toward an integrated Minnesota labor movement.⁹⁰ On October 22, 1947, Local 614 merged with Local 458.⁹¹

In September 1935, Swan Assarson, a Swedish born socialist and George Naumoff, a Croatian immigrant from Macedonia and elevator operator at the Minneapolis Athletic Club, gathered twenty employees of the Minneapolis Athletic Club. Deciding to organize a union, they recruited Bob Kelly, a communist bellhop at the Curtis Hotel and chartered the first integrated union in Minnesota, the Miscellaneous Workers Local 665, also affiliated with HERE.⁹² Local 665 sought to adapt an industrial unionism model of organizing the miscellaneous non-union hotel workers—elevator operators, maids, receptionists—into a single union to strengthen their bargaining power. Naumoff later recruited his co-workers at the Minneapolis Athletic Club, Albert Allen and Nellie Stone Johnson. Allen and Johnson later became vice presidents, the first blacks in Minnesota to hold such leadership in an integrated union.⁹³ By 1944, HERE had won closed shop agreements for Minneapolis hotels, solidifying its strength in the city.⁹⁴

Three key factors shaped a union's racial politics. First, the ability of leadership to be able to make unpopular decisions. This is clearly evident confront resistance from membership to what they saw as a decision by the "union officialdom" to end segregated employee dining rooms. Wright recalled arguing with angry members: "But they're [the black and Filipino

⁹⁰ Eric Arnesen, "Following the Color Line of Labor: Black Workers and the Labor Movement Before 1930," *Radical History Review* 1993, no. 55 (December 21, 1993): 74, doi:10.1215/01636545-1993-55-53; Naumoff, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with George Naumoff, 26–27.

⁹¹ Ed S. Miller to Raymond Wright, October 22, 1947, Hotel Employee and Restaurant Employee National Papers, Publications, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Cornell University Library.

⁹² "Charters Issued During September 1935," *The Catering Industry Employee* 44, no. 10 (October 1935): 4; "Hotel-Restaurant Workers Begin Drive," *Minneapolis Labor Review*, March 2, 1934; Naumoff, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with George Naumoff, 1–2; Raymond Wright, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Raymond R. Wright, interview by Carl Ross, November 1, 1981, 1–2, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁹³ Jennifer A Delton, *Making Minnesota Liberal: Civil Rights and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 66–67.

⁹⁴ "Closed-Shop Raise for Hotel Unions," *Minneapolis Labor Review*, January 6, 1944.

workers] all members of the union, they all pay dues, they all do the same type of work, they're all, to put in a poetical sense, human beings. Do you understand that, that you are all going to eat together?...The first one that does not go into this lunchroom and eat with the entire crew or raises hell about it, we will see that that person if fired".⁹⁵ Second, ability of union to satisfy rank and file expectations of wages, hours, work conditions, which Local 665 clearly did in their contract fights. Third, the extent to which the jurisdiction is composed to actual or potential black members. With blacks making up a significant portion of the hotel workers in Minneapolis, all three criteria are fulfilled for progressive racial policies.⁹⁶

Local 665 took its role in the civil rights movement seriously, with its members refusing to obey management orders to discriminate against black customers, holding meetings condemning lynching, fighting the replacement of black workers and appointing representatives to the Minneapolis Urban League's Industrial Committee.⁹⁷ Wright explains in his oral history how black workers were targeted for harassment and discipline by management. A black doorman at the Minneapolis Athletic Club punched a guest who swore at him. A Minneapolis Athletic Club dishwasher stumbled and dropped a stack of dishes. When a manager swore at him, he punched the manager. A black Curtis Hotel waiter, swore at by the owner, knocked the

⁹⁵ Wright, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Raymond R. Wright, 72.

⁹⁶ Orley Ashenfelter, *Working Paper: Racial Discrimination and Trade Unionism*, Princeton University. Industrial Relations Section, no. 17 (Princeton, N. J., 1971), 8–9.

⁹⁷ "43. (Strong, Edward G.) Organizational Sect. Work Fldr" n.d., African America, Communists, and the National Negro Congress, 1933-1947., Papers of the National Negro Congress, Schomburg Center, New York Public Library; "Discrimination Stopped in Large Minneapolis Restaurant by Unions; Waitresses Report Law Violation," *Minneapolis Spokesperson*, March 20, 1942; Ben Peery, "Ol' Jim Crow Suffers Set-Back As White Waitresses Expose Plotting," *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967)*, March 28, 1942; George P. Phillips to William M. Seaborn, October 6, 1948, Central Labor Union Collection, Minnesota Historical Society.

owner down. Each time, Local 665 got the worker their job back.⁹⁸ However, Naumoff's oral history suggests a very different approach than Wright:

We didn't treat the Negroes with a padded hand. We explained to them what's what. Any time some Negro was laid off or something like that, he come in and report, "This is discrimination." "All right," I said, "go ahead and tell me what happened." Well, they'd tell me this and that. I said, "Be sure, because if I'm going to take your case I want to know what I'm talking about. I'll go on the other side and ask." So in other words, we'd never just pat them on the back because a lot of places hypocritically they will. We were the best, and we were liked by the Negro people, the entire leadership of the Local #665. I believe Allen will tell you that, I hope. I still exchange Christmas cards with him.⁹⁹

Naumoff is incredibly paternalistic in his comments, claiming that Local 665 “didn't treat the Negroes with a padded hand” and that “we'd never just pat them on the back”. It doesn't appear that Naumoff took these concerns about discrimination seriously, referring to them as “this and that”. Naumoff appears to recognize the questionable nature of his remarks and refers to his friendship with Allen to absolve himself of accusations of racism. Just as HERE locals varied in their treatment of black workers, HERE officials varied as well.

HERE's monthly journal, *The Catering Industry Employee*, offers more insights into the tenuous position of Local 614. While *The Catering Industry Employee* routinely published updates about elections, organizing and union social events from Local 458, Local 556 in St. Paul, Minneapolis Bartenders Local 152 and the Duluth Local 99. Local 614 was never mentioned. Even when describing the Curtis Hotel in preparation for the 1934 convention, Leslie Sinton of Local 458 fails to mention the existence of its union waiters when he praises its “excellent service”. Similarly, Local 614 never listed member deaths in the national publication. This is probably attributable to the incredibly small size of Local 614 but disconnect between a

⁹⁸ That Curtis Hotel waiter appears to be Robert Mallory. Wright, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Raymond R. Wright, 72–73.

⁹⁹ Naumoff, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with George Naumoff, 26.

white dominated national union's monthly journal and an all-black waiter local presumably also played a role. When Local 614 won wage increases at the Curtis Hotel, Raymond Wright wrote a summary instead of a member of Local 614. In the same edition, Local 458 had two different articles, including a half page photo of its new officers. An examination of HERE locals' expenditure reimbursements, published monthly in *The Catering Industry Employee*, shows Local 614 made several payments to the national union but never appeared to receive financial support from the national union.¹⁰⁰ The limitation of my research make drawing any conclusions from that impossible.

At first glance, a craft union within the more conservative AFL seems an odd place for unions like Local 614 and Local 665. In *Dishing It Out*, Dorothy Cobble explains that craft based union gave "respectability". While craft unionism often meant exclusion, it is not incompatible with the mobilization of marginalized groups.¹⁰¹ Richard Schneirov builds upon Cobble's arguments in his article "Labor and urban politics: class conflict and the origins of modern liberalism in Chicago, 1864-97". Schneirov's research on Chicago suggests that for Minneapolis waiters, craft unions allowed unskilled workers to control their workplace, gain pride and claims to respectability and form alliances with employers. Overall, craft unions enabled black men and white women to access some of the privileges craft unionism had created for white men.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ It is unclear how this compares to other locals as the microfilm was in bad condition and hard to read and the indexing was often inaccurate. These added challenges and the time constraints I had meant I only made pdfs of pages that mentioned 614 or 665. "Report of the Secretary-Treasurer-Continued," March 1934; "Report of the Secretary-Treasurer-Continued," *The Catering Industry Employee*, July 1934, 16.

¹⁰¹ Cobble, *Dishing It out*, 6-7.

¹⁰² Richard. Schneirov, *Labor and Urban Politics: Class Conflict and the Origins of Modern Liberalism in Chicago, 1864-97*, *The Working Class in American History; Working Class in American History*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 314.

Section 6: Black Unionism and the Civil Rights Movement

As Chapter 3 describes, in the early 1930s, few large scale civil-rights organizations existed in Minnesota. For the previous two decades, black social service agencies in northern cities had focused more on accommodating the hundreds of thousands of migrants rather than organizing them into a politically potent group and the pressure of the Great Depression pushed the resources of these groups to the brink.¹⁰³ The social service focus of the Urban League and the legal approach of the NAACP had not prepared them to act effectively in the workplaces and working-class neighborhoods where black Minnesotans fought their most decisive struggles in the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁰⁴ While the BSCP established an impressive network of local unions, councils and auxiliaries, it remained marginalized in world of organized labor and thus failed to gain influence on the direction of the broader civil rights and labor movements. What turned the tide for black labor was the rise of a “New Negro labor leadership” in hundreds of locals across the country. During World War II, over half a million blacks joined unions, rising to power in industrial unions that “spread like wildfire” across industries with large numbers of black workers. Even the more conservative AFL was forced to begin organizing black workers.

Black unionists gained increasing power in their local unions and civil-rights groups. “When we got active, the NAACP was called a ‘tip-sipping organization, silk stocking,’” a black United Packinghouse Workers of American activist recalled, emphasizing the degree to which black union members shifted the priorities of community organizations to reflect the priorities of working-class blacks.¹⁰⁵ This disconnect was visible in Minnesota as well. Johnson remarks in an oral history that blacks who came into the NAACP from the labor movement understood “it

¹⁰³ Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow*, 10.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, “Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement,” *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 3 (1988): 787.

¹⁰⁵ Bynum, A. *Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, 225–227.

doesn't make any difference how many business or professionals you get, they have absolutely no economic security until you have that floor, which is the laboring class of people".¹⁰⁶ As black unionists sponsored speeches, lead discussion groups and conducted voter registration drives, they linked their struggles within organized labor to broader campaigns for racial equality.

As Michael Honey notes in his introduction, unions did not offer blacks rights. Instead, unions were a chance to participate and exert influence in ways usually denied to them in society. Many black workers voted for the first time in their life in a NLRB election.¹⁰⁷ The early 1930s Minneapolis labor was community focused and grassroots led. Workers recruited from local networks, building a strong culture of solidarity and protest.¹⁰⁸ Grassroots institutions like labor unions created and sustained bonds of fellowship and a collectivist ethos that ultimately informed black working-class political struggles.¹⁰⁹ This occurred in many ways. Local 614 sent delegates on behalf of the Minneapolis Central Labor Union to the Minneapolis Urban League.¹¹⁰ Local 665, as the the largest group of organized blacks in Minnesota "pioneered the first steps in the [Minneapolis] civil rights movement".¹¹¹ The rapid growth in black union membership in Minneapolis shifted in focus of existing civil rights organizations to working-class concerns—to many black leaders, this movement seemed to represent the coming of a new era. Historian Keith Griffler argues that unions gained such importance in the early

¹⁰⁶ Johnson, Minnesota Black History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, 11–12.

¹⁰⁷ Michael K Honey, *Black Workers Remember: An Oral History of Segregation, Unionism, and the Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), xviii.

¹⁰⁸ Baron, *Work Engendered*, 298–305.

¹⁰⁹ Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (June 1, 1993): 38, doi:10.2307/2079698.

¹¹⁰ George P. Phillips to Talmage B. Carey, May 10, 1945, Central Labor Union Collection, Minnesota Historical Society.

¹¹¹ Carl Ross, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Carl E. Ross, interview by Berman Hyman, September 18, 1986, 13, Minnesota Historical Society.

civil rights movement that, “It seemed for a time that the union hall had replaced the courtroom and the legislature as the center of change for African Americans”.¹¹²

In Minneapolis, the NAACP and Urban League reflected this shift. In 1943, the Minneapolis branch of the NAACP reported 1,135 members, 24% of the black residents in the city.¹¹³ By examining newspaper articles listing NAACP members and comparing it to the list of hotel workers I created, I estimate 32% of known black hotel union members were members of the NAACP in 1943. 29% of black non-union hotel workers were NAACP members.¹¹⁴ This high membership rate suggests two factors. First, heightened politicization existed among black hotel workers, even for those unwilling or unable to join a union.¹¹⁵ Second, the demographics of black hotel workers—higher income, increased stability of residency and claims to respectability—enabled involvement in community organizations.

As described in the introduction to Chapter 3, Curtis Hotel waiter and likely union member Matthew Little was president of the Minneapolis NAACP.¹¹⁶ Albert Allen, a member of Local 665 and a focus of Chapter 5, served as president of the Minneapolis NAACP from 1946 to 1949 and was a member of the Minneapolis Fair Employment Practices Committee (MFEP) in the early 1950s.¹¹⁷ Nellie Stone Johnson, a vice president of Local 665, was a member of the

¹¹² Griffler, “The Black Radical Intellectual and the Black Worker,” 3–4.

¹¹³ 4646 blacks lived in Minneapolis in 1940. This percentage is a rough estimate. It is unclear how many, if any, of those 1943 members were white and if that number included non-Minneapolis residents from nearby suburbs. “Members for 1943 Minneapolis Branch of NAACP,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, September 10, 1943, Minnesota Historical Society; United States. Bureau of the Census. and United States. Bureau of the Census., *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population. Second Series. : Characteristics of Population: Minnesota*. (Washington: U.S. Gov’t. Print. Off., 1942), 168.

¹¹⁴ 10 of 31 known black hotel union members were NAACP members in 1943. 23 of 77 known non-union black hotel workers were NAACP members in 1943. See appendix for the lists. “Members for 1943 Minneapolis Branch of NAACP.”

¹¹⁵ Minneapolis hotels were not closed shop until 1944, so union membership was optional in 1943. “Closed-Shop Raise for Hotel Unions.”

¹¹⁶ “Matthew Little, Activist and Businessman,” *African American Registry*, 2013, http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/matthew-little-activist-and-businessman.

¹¹⁷ Jennifer A Delton, “Labor, Politics, and African American Identity in Minneapolis, 1930-50,” *Minnesota History*, 2002, 426.

NAACP and served on the MEFPC as well.¹¹⁸ John F. Thomas, a waiter at the Curtis Hotel, became an administrator at the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House.¹¹⁹ Anthony Cassius and Samuel Harris, both presidents of Local 614, and Albert Allen and Nellie Stone Johnson of Local 665 were also on the board of the Minneapolis Urban League, along with several other hotel union members.¹²⁰ As Johnson put it in her oral history, “The labor people were the key people in the NAACP”.¹²¹ Recalling how the growth of political power of Local 665 forced the Minneapolis NAACP to adopt new goals, Johnson explains how she used labor unions to pressure the NAACP to support for the Fair Employment Practices Act in the 1940s:

I tried to get that [the Fair Employment Practices Act] through the NAACP and our legal redress chairman at that time moved to table my motion. My goodness, the NAACP! But I went over to the Central Labor body and got it through. And then Bob Wishart put it through the Hennepin County CIO Council. I went out and did some more organizing for memberships in the NAACP, lifted it off the table, and got it passed...I think that they had decided among themselves it was reverse discrimination, that was the argument. And we had a knock-down, drag-out on that one.¹²²

When the NAACP dug in against Johnson, she rallied unions. Over time, the NAACP and the Urban League became friendlier to labor unions. As a result of this new alliance between black protest groups and labor unions, civil rights advocacy became a defining characteristic of urban liberalism.¹²³

¹¹⁸ “Activist, Businesswoman, Nellie Stone Johnson,” *African American Registry*, 2013, http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/activist-businesswoman-nellie-stone-johnson.

¹¹⁹ Herbert Howell, “Twin City Notes: Minneapolis-St. Paul,” *The Chicago Defender*, December 7, 1940; Mick Caouette, “Administrator of Humanity, John Thomas,” *African American Registry*, 2013, http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/administrator-humanity-john-thomas.

¹²⁰ Minneapolis Urban League, “Bulletin: Summary of Activities and Interracial Relations in Minneapolis,” August 18, 1945, 4–11, E185.5.N33 M49, Minnesota Historical Society.

¹²¹ Nellie Stone Johnson and David Brauer, *Nellie Stone Johnson: The Life of an Activist* (Saint Paul, Minn.: Ruminator Books, 2000), 122.

¹²² Nellie Stone Johnson, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, interview by Hyman Berman et al., March 1, 1988, 18, Minnesota Historical Society.

¹²³ Korstad and Lichtenstein, “Opportunities Found and Lost,” 787, 800.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided the history of hotel union organizing in Minnesota and the necessary national context. Section 1 looked at the history of HERE's racism. The 1930s were a turning point for the organization, but fighting entrenched racism took more than convention resolutions. Section 2 discusses both independent all-black unions and all-black locals within white unions. All-black locals represented a grassroots effort by blacks to participate in the labor movement. The "class first" approach analyzed in Section 3 shows how certain black radicals, particularly Philip Randolph, emphasized the common interest of black and white workers and downplayed, for the most part, the long history of racism in the white labor movement. Section 4 looks at the repeated failures of early attempts by white unions to organize black hotel workers in Minneapolis. Section 5 provides a detailed history of HERE Local 614 and Local 665, which is connected to the early civil rights movement in Minnesota in Section 6.

Six years after the all-white Local 458 refused Anthony Cassius membership, Local 614 won a decisive victory over the Curtis Hotel, ending differential pay between white and black hotel waiters in Minneapolis. HERE, despite its progressive convention resolutions, was slow to address criticism of its segregated locals because in this era remained largely a craft union. For black waiters in Local 614, a craft based local provided access to respectability, while the industrial unionism model of Local 665 built the power necessary to win impressive contracts. While the Local 614 existed because of racist exclusion, its all-black membership could elect black leadership—even in the integrated and racially progressive Local 665, a black worker was never elected president. Both unions existed simultaneously as a site of struggle for inclusion, access and influence for black hotel workers. Debates within HERE about craft vs industrial unionism, debates among black labor leaders about joining white-led unions or building

independent all-black unions, and debates within civil-rights organizations about policy priorities all shaped the formation of Local 614 and Local 665.

Chapter 5.

Labor as an Integrating Force: Oral Histories with Anthony Cassius, Albert Allen and Nellie Stone Johnson

In 1945, Local 665 organizer Swan Assarson urged Nellie Stone Johnson to run for Minneapolis Library Board. The Local 665 newsletter proudly announced her candidacy and urged members to vote for her.¹ With the backing of Local 665 and endorsed by the newly created Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party and the Minneapolis Central Labor Union (CLU), she became the first elected black official in the city, winning by nearly five thousand votes—more votes than blacks lived in the city.² This active support for leadership by a black woman was rare in the labor movement, Johnson explained in her oral history: “No other union took one of its members and had them running for public office and that sort of thing. And 665 certainly gave me all of the support it was possible to give me. The delegation fought like mad for me to get the endorsement from the CLU.”³ In an editorial discussing the significance of Johnson’s victory, the *Minneapolis Spokesman* explained that local newspapers de-emphasized race in their reporting on her campaign.⁴ Pointing to Johnson’s extensive involvement in labor and community organizing, the *Minneapolis Spokesman* writes:

Mrs. Stone’s victory traces a new pattern for Negro leadership. First she made an active contribution to the community life. Then she became a candidate for

¹ Hotel & Restaurant Employees Local 665, “Union News,” June 1945, Lloyd M. MacAloon’s Papers, Minnesota Historical Society; “Books - Folks Well Known By Nellie Stone,” *Minneapolis Labor Review*, June 7, 1945.

² “Nellie Stone Says Books Are Weapons,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, June 8, 1945, Minnesota Historical Society; “Nellie Stone Election Highlight of Victory for Liberal Forces,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, June 15, 1945, Minnesota Historical Society; Jennifer A. Delton, “Forging a Northern Strategy: Civil Rights in Liberal Democratic Politics, 1940-1948” 1997, 140; Minneapolis Urban League, “Bulletin: Summary of Activities and Interracial Relations in Minneapolis,” August 18, 1945, 6, E185.5.N33 M49, Minnesota Historical Society.

³ Nellie Stone Johnson, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, interview by Carl Ross, November 17, 1981, 7, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁴ This claim may be exaggerated. While it is true the article text does not mention Johnson’s race, both the *Minneapolis Labor Review* and the *Minneapolis Spokesman* included photos of her leading up to the election. I was unable to locate *Minneapolis Tribune* coverage. “Books - Folks Well Known By Nellie Stone.”

public office, not a NEGRO candidate for office. Mrs. Stone's election in our opinion is largely due to the fact she had the good sense to see the problems of her racial group in relation to the problems of the entire community.⁵

The *Minneapolis Spokesman*'s editorial highlights two important themes for this chapter. First, the role of leadership in labor unions as a “new pattern” for black activists to gain credibility among whites. Second, these union leadership positions enabling a semblance of a non-racial identity—which the *Minneapolis Spokesman* emphasizes as distinct from a “NEGRO candidate for office” with its capitalization—who can be seen as looking beyond the needs of black Minnesotans and thus appeal to a larger voting population. Johnson's victory is an impressive testament to her organizing. At the same time, the *Minneapolis Spokesman*'s editorial demonstrates how labor unions were viewed as an integrating force, an opportunity to pull an isolated black community into the political mainstream.

In this chapter, my goal is to examine the motivations and leadership of Anthony Cassius, Albert Allen and Nellie Stone Johnson in Local 614 and Local 665 to understand how they responded to the contradictions of their hotel employment. I begin with Section 1, explaining the methodological choice of oral histories. Section 2, to help understand the leadership of Local 614 and Local 665, is a brief literature review of scholarship on black leadership. I start with Kevin Gaines *Uplifting the Race*, which examines tensions between working-class and migrant blacks and black elites. Robert Hawkins' chapter “Brotherhood Men and Singing Slackers” in the book *Reframing Randolph* looks at how racial uplift and respectability shaped union organizing in the BSCP. In *Leadership, Conflict, and Cooperation in Afro-American Social Thought*, John Childs connects this idea of an educated black elite to organization leadership, arguing that certain black leaders subscribed to a theory of “vanguard”. For unionists, this

⁵ Emphasis original. “It Did Happen Here!,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, June 15, 1945, Minnesota Historical Society.

vanguard promoted a “class first” analysis to integrate themselves into a white labor movement. Devon Carbado and Mitu Gulati’s *Acting White* connects the central ideas of racial uplift to working within white institutions, such as labor unions. Peter Friedlander’s *The Emergence of a UAW Local 1936-1939* and Jennifer Delton’s *Making Minnesota Liberal* elaborate on the role of individualism in union leadership. Section 3 discusses Carl Ross, the historian conducting most of the oral histories I draw from in this chapter. Section 4, 5 and 6 examine interviews with Anthony Cassius, president of Local 614 and Albert Allen and Nellie Stone Johnson, both vice presidents of Local 665. For a few black hotel workers, organizing a union offered the chance to rise from just another subservient black waiter to a powerful union leader. Cassius, Allen and Johnson highlight the diversity of the motivations of black union leadership in Minneapolis yet all three viewed the labor movement as an integrating force, inserting themselves as individuals and the larger black communities of Minneapolis in the economic and political mainstream.

Section 1: Oral History Methodology

In *Silencing the Past*, Trouillot uses the story the Alamo, the ignored histories of the Haitian Revolution and the creation of Columbus Day to explore the role of power in shaping “history”. History can be defined both as the sociohistorical process and the narrative of that process—both “what happened” and “that which is said to have happened”. Trouillot argues for a third interpretation that allows for these two definitions to overlap because the boundary between the two meanings is highly fluid.⁶ Understanding both what happened and what is said about what happened allows us to examine “silencing”. Due to uneven power in the production of sources, archives and narratives, Trouillot writes that “...any historical narrative is a particular

⁶ Michel-Rolph. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1995), 2–3.

bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary according”.⁷ In the privileged position of a researcher, with my power to produce history and define the narratives within it, I constantly risk “sanitizing” historical events and figures. Power enters the creation of history by forbidding describing what happened from the view of some of the people who saw it happen or to whom it happened—and refusing to acknowledge this is happening all the time, from the viewpoint of those with the power to claim objectivity. With that exercise of power, “facts” become clear and sanitized, stripped of their contexts and complexities, twisting and packaging the “facts”, to meet specific political ends, and as Trouillot’s book’s title suggests, “silencing the past”.

Oral history operates within Trouillot’s third interpretation, as it allows participants in history to describe their view of the “facts”, placed within a narrative of their own creation and rejecting any claim to objectivity as pointless. In *Telling Stories*, Maynes, Pierce and Laslett discuss how personal narratives can fulfill this role, examining how individual selfhood and agency are constructed in people’s articulated self-understanding. Maynes et al. explains that by bringing new, often marginalized voices into a mainstream record, oral histories provide “invaluable witness, critiques and alternative narratives” of a hidden history.⁸ The telling of a story by an individual provides access to their own claims about how their motivations, emotions and imaginations have been shaped by cumulative life experience. Maynes et al. argues that, read carefully, personal narratives can “provide unique insights into the connections between individual life trajectories and collective forces and institutions beyond the individual”. Echoing Trouillot, Maynes et al. explain that just as context illuminates historical events, the narrator’s

⁷ Ibid., 26–27.

⁸ Mary Jo. Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara. Laslett, *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 7.

moment in their life contextualizes how they remember and interpret historical event.⁹ Personal narratives are “works in progress”, which change over the course of a life, involving “not just placing events in a narrative sequence but also figuring out which narrative sequence an event belongs in”.¹⁰ Memories and the stories people create from them are shaped simultaneously by collective, politicized, narratives and individual psychological needs.

In the last chapter of *Black Workers Remember*, his book of oral histories of black workers in Memphis, Tennessee, Honey describes his final interview with Clarence Coe. Honey had not expected to do any more interviews and writes that Coe, speaking of his endurance of racism and how the pain of these memories lingered still, “...obviously had more he wanted to tell me. Unlike our first meeting, when he wasn’t sure he wanted to remember, now he definitely wanted to remember. He wanted me to remember and he wanted the reader to know”.¹¹ Having not been present at Cassius, Johnson or Allen’s interviews, I will never know the emotional reactions. However, all three emphasize certain memories as they recall their life story because those particular memories, by remaining in the foreground of memory, help define who they were. In what Lewis labels the “politics of memory”, researchers must view historical subjects as “multipositional actors, who foreground and background aspects of themselves depending on the social context and historical period”.¹² Allen, Cassius and Johnson all had agendas when they agreed to interview. Equally, I, as the researcher, have my own agenda, driven by my motivations in writing this history and by my scholarly obligations to Macalester. Personal narratives highlight the construction of history by examining multiple perspectives, each with a

⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰ Ibid., 40.

¹¹ Michael K Honey, *Black Workers Remember: An Oral History of Segregation, Unionism, and the Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), 370.

¹² Earl Lewis, “Connecting Memory, Self, and the Power of Place in African American Urban History,” *Journal of Urban History* 21, no. 3 (1995): 366.

separate agenda. Attention to these agendas offers insight into the agency of those telling the stories and the social processes that shaped that telling.¹³ Summarizing Maynes and Trouillot, Anastasi writes that “the examination of personal narrative [is] opportunity for re-examining historical figures as complex individuals with agency and subjectivity, who are influenced by and reactive to the forces of power that structure their local, national, and global environments”.¹⁴

The voices of working-class people—least of all working-class blacks— are rarely recorded in official histories or textbooks. As I began my research, I was struck by the lack of research on blacks in the Minnesota labor movement. In his introduction, Honey explains that the articles in labor newspapers and the interviews with mostly white union leadership leaves out the voice of black workers, a major obstacle in writing histories of black unionists. In response to these silences, Honey turned to oral histories “as the only available method for uncovering an active black working class in factories and other workplaces”.¹⁵ Comparing oral histories to storytelling, Honey argues that capturing these stories for a written culture requires the “participation of a collector who breaks the usual isolation between the world of books and the lived world of communities”.¹⁶ Similarly to Maynes et al., Honey writes that the interviews he conducted gave the participants an “opportunity to recount and reevaluate their past”.¹⁷ In recalling their life stories, people take their knowledge and memory out of storage and try to make sense of their lives, a process that can provide a new way to come to terms with the terrible or sad aspects of one’s life. Honey highlights the power of these narratives, writing that “as

¹³ Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett, *Telling Stories*, 111.

¹⁴ Kathryn Anastasi, “Ways We Remember: Rethinking Symbols of Italian American History and Imagining Alternative Narratives,” *American Studies Honors Projects*, May 29, 2015, 71, http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/amst_honors/14.

¹⁵ Honey, *Black Workers Remember*, 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

these workers speak to us from the present as witnesses to their own lives, their memories reinforce the truth of their experiences and deepen our understanding”.¹⁸

In *The Emergence of a UAW Local 1936-1939*, Friedlander uses his extensive interviews with Edmund Kord, the president of UAW Local 229 for its first eighteen years, to create an incredibly detailed account of the formation of the local. Friedlander calls for a move beyond a labor history that merely studies unions as institutions because the emergence of those institutions is only a single aspect of a vastly complicated social process. Similarly, most labor history operates under the assumption of an individuated, rational worker, who views the process of organizing a union in narrowly rational and goal-orientated terms. Such pragmatism by workers is obviously real. However, the assumption that workers, regardless of their historical experiences and backgrounds, exhibit a similar pattern of attitudes and behaviors, at best ignores some of the most fascinating and important challenges of organizing and at worst silences individual experiences of workers. The task for the researcher is not merely to ask whether workers are pro-union or not—as if the research is simply conducting an unofficial National Labor Relations Board election—but rather to help illustrate the people and communities involved.¹⁹

While my research focuses only a small subset of a larger community, their memories comprise a larger collective memory that “personalizes the...struggles of a larger group” and provide a “bottom-up” perspective on Minnesota labor history and the ways that black hotel workers used unions—often racist organizations that enforced white supremacy—to create quality lives for their families and communities.²⁰ Oral histories are highly personal reflections,

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Peter Friedlander, *The Emergence of a UAW Local, 1936-1939: A Study in Class and Culture* ([Pittsburgh]: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), xiv–xv.

²⁰ Honey, *Black Workers Remember*, 12.

yet reach beyond the individual. As a testament to the hidden realities of American history, I believe these memories will open new doors to readers not familiar with the histories of the black workers in Minneapolis and their role in shaping the larger Minnesota labor movement. Honey explains, "...by coming to know, indirectly, a few people who lived these particular experiences, readers might reconsider the broader picture of the past and think about how the past bears upon the present. These stories are as separate and distinct as the individuals who tell them. Yet they compose a collective memory, one which personalizes the tragic and heroic struggles of a larger group".²¹ George Holloway, a black union organizer Honey interviewed, describes himself and his fellow unionists as "witnesses...to a hidden history of struggle for freedom".²² Without such testimonies from ordinary people, it often appears that events are directed from the top. Both the workers Honey interviews and the workers in the hotels of Minneapolis were vital participants in a bitter and proud history.

Section 2: Impact of Class on Black Union Leadership

Kevin Gaines, in his book *Uplifting the Race*, argues that the basis of the division between upper-class and working-class blacks was the self-help ideology of "racial uplift". Educated blacks sought to refute the view that black were biologically inferior and unassimilable by claiming that class differences—indeed, the very existence of a "better class" of blacks—was evidence of "race progress". Convinced that the improvement of blacks' material and moral condition would diminish white racism, these black elites embraced respectability. However, racial uplift ideology cannot be isolated from dominant narratives of white supremacy. Gaines writes, "While black elites' oppositional claims of self-help may have symbolized their desire for

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 13.

independence and self-determination, this self-image obscured the extent to which self-help also functioned as an accommodation to blacks' non-citizenship status".²³ To prove their status and moral authority as "bourgeois agents of civilization", many black elites sought to distinguish themselves from the black majority and in particular, black migrants. This orientation toward self-help, when considered in the context of the impossibility of class mobility for most blacks, faulted working-class blacks for their lower status—echoing white supremacist judgements of "the Negro problem".²⁴

Racial uplift increased divisions between black elites and labor unions. Migration by working-class blacks posed a threat to elite status, as migrant blacks began to disrupt a carefully constructed narrative of black progress dependent on respectability. According to racial uplift, lower-class blacks belonged in the rural south, not the urban north, an argument that tinged with the connotation that black workers needed the discipline of white land owners.²⁵ This created immense complications for organizing. Elaborating on Gaines, Clarence Lang writes in *Grassroots at the Gateway*, "The idea of a black community was a tangle of mutuality, self-interest and stratification...The politics of black middle-class 'respectability', often contingent on white gaze, collided with a black working-class politics of 'self-respect' autonomous from both white approval and black middle-class assent".²⁶ Gaines argues that black elites, in their attempt to identify with white elites, blamed working-class whites alone for racist violence and seldom noticed that their alliance with white elites pitted themselves not only against racist white workers but black workers as well. To advocates of racial uplift, labor unions were seen as

²³ Kevin Kelly Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), xiv.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2–4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 88–92.

²⁶ Clarence. Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-75, Class, Culture; Class, Culture*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 4, ebrary <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10389772>.

preventing the black worker from earning an “honest living”, with “the working classes, strikes and violence...virtually synonymous in the minds of elite blacks”.²⁷

Robert Hawkins’ chapter “Brotherhood Men and Singing Slackers” in the book *Reframing Randolph* examines how Philip Randolph, fully conscious of the gendered stereotypes and conventions of masculinity implicit in respectability politics, manipulated these in order to advance the standing of Pullman porters. The American political economy judged blacks as indolent slackers. To change that view and raise porters to middle-class respectability, Randolph created a binary opposition between black street musicians and “respectable” male breadwinners working on trains. The BSCP attacked the practice of tipping with the hope of distinguishing the unionized porter from the informal work, apparent dependency, and perceived servility of black street performers. Fighting a company that marketed itself with the racial caricature and submissive stereotypes explained in Chapter 2, an emphasis of middle-class respectability, with its disparaging certain aspects of black working-class culture, became important for Randolph.²⁸ Hawkins writes, “In the Brotherhood’s view, the advancement of black unionism, the maintenance of black manhood and the fostering of interracial solidarity all demanded an end to Pullman porters’ dependence on the tipping system, both literal and symbolic”.²⁹ To the BSCP, tipping undermined black male breadwinners because it both connected them to the non-respectable street musician while at the same time creating dependency on white customers. Hawkins argues “gender, race and class were at the center of Randolph’s project of framing the porters as culturally respected men who took care of their wives and children in a manner

²⁷ Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 93–95.

²⁸ Clarence Lang and Andrew E. Kersten, *Reframing Randolph: Labor, Black Freedom, and the Legacies of A. Philip Randolph* (NYU Press, 2015), 101–102, <http://nyupress.org/books/9780814785942/>.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

consistent with the ideal of white patriarchy”.³⁰ The speeches and union newspapers Hawkins draws from do not exist for Local 614 or Local 665 but the research addresses many of the contradictions black hotel workers in Minneapolis also faced as tipped workers.

In his book *Leadership, Conflict, and Cooperation in Afro-American Social Thought*, John Childs connects racial uplift to theories of black leadership. Childs presents a theory of a “vanguard”, an exceptional leader who stood out among “a large mass of apparently backward people, whose capacity for disciplined analysis and self-government seemed deeply retarded by long years of oppression” and could lead toward change.³¹ Ordinary people have power but lack consciousness. Only the vanguard have the “special knowledge of how the liberation of the people is to take place” and must awaken the masses “out of [their] stage of unconscious dormant energy and give them an awareness of their own strength by directing them in how to act”.³² This assertion of importance by an educated elite leadership is a fabricated needs and is based in racial uplift.³³ Childs uses Randolph to explain his theory. *The Messenger*, Randolph’s journal, argued racism was “irrational emotion harnessed by the capitalist machine”. White workers, with proper understanding of capitalism, would come to see how irrational racism was. From Randolph and *The Messenger* viewpoint, black activists were mistaken in viewing racial and not economic oppression as crucial to organizing. Enlightened black leadership—the vanguard—understood the economic roots of racism and the importance of a “class first” theory to building interracial solidarity.³⁴ *The Messenger* argued black workers needed “scientific, disciplined, socialist leadership” like Randolph to overcome their distrust of racist white workers

³⁰ Ibid., 12.

³¹ John Brown. Childs, *Leadership, Conflict, and Cooperation in Afro-American Social Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 12.

³² Ibid., 3.

³³ Ibid., 6–7.

³⁴ Ibid., 54–60.

and unions.³⁵ A 1939 letter by various black HERE leaders in New York echoed Randolph's message, urging black hotel workers to "show them [their co-workers] the way to a better manner of living and working by joining the union yourself".³⁶

In *Acting White*, Devon Carbado and Mitu Gulati examine workplace identities. White employers screen blacks who are "...racially comfortable [to whites] in part because they negate rather than activate racial stereotypes...the employer's surmise is that these 'good blacks' will think of themselves as people first and black people second (or third or fourth); they will neither 'play the race card' nor generate racial antagonism or tensions on the workplace".³⁷ While Carbado and Gulati focus on modern corporations, their theories can apply to variety of white controlled institutions—such as 1930s labor unions—because they focus on how black success in these institutions requires balancing supplying racial comfort, negating racial stereotypes and presenting as racially palatable to whites.³⁸ They present a variety of strategies used to negate stereotypes, including the idea of "partial passing". Partial passing occurs when someone works their identity to "modify the stereotypical assumptions about or otherwise suppress the salience of that status... [by] distancing [themselves] from the Outsider group or embracing the Insider group". By downplaying racial difference and "selectively escaping the attributes of their Outsider identity", these individuals are seen as "racial exceptions". However, partial passing individuals thus become an exception to otherwise unchallenged stereotypes.³⁹ Because of these individuals' abilities to work within white institutions as "racial exceptions", they can function as vanguards by bridging the divide between a white union and a black worker.

³⁵ Ibid., 68.

³⁶ "An Open Letter to Negro Workers in Hotels," 1939, WAG.148 Box 13, Tamiment Library and Wagner Archives.

³⁷ Devon W. Carbado and Mitu. Gulati, *Acting White?: Rethinking Race in "Post-Racial" America* (Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

³⁸ Ibid., 160.

³⁹ Ibid., 26–32.

Returning to Friedlander, his book expands on the role of individualism in organizing unions. Unions are by nature collectivist organizations. However, organizing a union requires a certain level of individualism: who will be the first to stand up, to organize, to break the rules? This interplay of collectivism and individualism creates a tension. Friedlander argues out that his interviews offered a view into how certain workers took the lead in organizing, describing the leadership as “aggressively seizing opportunities and bent on self-improvement, they never less pursued their aims with an egalitarian and broadly social-democratic framework”.⁴⁰ The economic constraints of the Great Depression forced “entrepreneurial” individuals to form unions instead of businesses. Minnesotan historian Jennifer Delton connects this individualism to the leadership of Local 614 and Local 665, writing that, “The idea of organizing into unions represented progress and educated thinking, a way to rise above menial labor and fulfill one’s individual potential; the labor movement provided opportunity for educated blacks to be leaders, not peons”.⁴¹ In an oral history, Marvin Anderson, a red cap at the St. Paul Union Depot, explained that for black service workers life was defined by community presence, not the job. Organizations like fraternities and unions offered structures and positions of recognition as a rejection of the servility required at work: “A person could be a shoeshine man during the day, but he could be Mr. President at night”.⁴²

The largest generation of college-educated black youth came of age in the 1930s. Many rejected the ideology of racial uplift and “talented tenth” and chose to use their education for militant activism. Graduating in the 1930s, without any job prospects, made these talented yet

⁴⁰ Friedlander, *The Emergence of a UAW Local, 1936-1939*, 87.

⁴¹ Jennifer A Delton, “Labor, Politics, and African American Identity in Minneapolis, 1930-50,” *Minnesota History*, 2002, 424–423.

⁴² Kate. Cavett et al., *Voices of Rondo: Oral Histories of Saint Paul’s Historic Black Community* (Minneapolis: Syren Book Co., 2005), 187–188.

restless youth open to new forms of protest tactics.⁴³ Unlike traditional black organizations such as the Urban League or National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the labor movement gave a few blacks in Minnesota a sense of individuality, integrating them into local politics and movements as actors, not pawns.⁴⁴ As discussed in Chapter 2, hotels used black workers to tap into a white nostalgia for slavery. Going to work meant performing plantation culture. In Chapter 3, we begin to see how a small black community, with its respectability and racial uplift and extensive network of social groups, became stifling for a younger generation and outright hostile toward migrants. The prestige of hotel jobs fading, and trapped between white racism at work and a parochial community at home, union organizing represented what seemed as a chance to escape both for certain hotel workers in Minneapolis. However, as Hawkins lays out, the added constraints of racialized service work threatening claims to workplace dignity complicate a full rejection of respectability.

Section 3: The Context of Carl Ross' Interviews

To fully understand the interviews with Cassius, Johnson and Allen, we need to understand the context in which they took place. In the late 1970s, Carl Ross, a self-taught labor historian, Communist Party organizer and former member of Local 665, gave a lecture titled “Labor History as Community History” at Boston University on the history of hotel unions in Minnesota.⁴⁵ Collaborating with the Minnesota Historical Society and Cal Wright, the last communist president of UNITE HERE Local 17, Ross conducted oral histories with former

⁴³ Erik S Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress and the Rise of Militant Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 11.

⁴⁴ Jennifer A Delton, *Making Minnesota Liberal: Civil Rights and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 67.

⁴⁵ Ross' involvement in the Communist Party likely explains his neglect to interview any Trotskyist members of Local 665, despite their major influence following the 1934 Teamster strike.

members of Local 665.⁴⁶ The collaboration with Local 17 and Ross' long history of involvement with the Minneapolis labor movement gave him impressive insight. However, the context of the interviews creates challenges. In his grant request for the research project, Ross notes he is good friends with many of the people he interviewed—Albert Allen was his next door neighbor—which resulted in assumptions about what was common knowledge and did not need asking, limiting my ability to fully understand the interviews.⁴⁷ Additionally, the goal of creating an official history potentially encouraged interviewees to soften their criticism of their union and exaggerate their individual achievements.

Race is unmentioned in the grant proposal and was a subject of minimal attention in Ross' interviews, despite Local 665 being the largest organized group of black workers in Minnesota for several decades.⁴⁸ Ross in multiple interviews appears to have an agenda in cementing the image of Local 665 as a stellar example of racial egalitarianism and prompted interviewees to agree that very few blacks worked in the hotels.⁴⁹ This trend of Ross continued beyond his academic research: when Bob Kelly, one of the main organizers of Local 665 in Minneapolis, died in 1990, Ross credits Kelly for winning “dignity and security, equality...for white and black workers” and ending “the Jim Crow local” by merging Local 614 and Local

⁴⁶ Carl Ross, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Carl E. Ross, interview by Berman Hyman, September 18, 1986, 6–7, Minnesota Historical Society. Local 614 was not the focus of Ross' research. He interviewed Cassius because of Cassius' role in creating Local 665 and most of the interview focuses on Local 665.

⁴⁷ Carl Ross, “Grant Proposal, Local 665,” n.d., 4, Carl Ross Papers, Box 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁴⁸ Ross, “Grant Proposal, Local 665.”

⁴⁹ George Naumoff, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with George Naumoff, interview by Carl Ross, August 8, 1981, 26–27, Minnesota Historical Society; Marjorie J. Brawthen and Elwin T. Brawthen, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Elwin T. and Marjorie J. Brawthen, interview by Carl Ross, March 13, 1982, 16, Minnesota Historical Society; Douglas Hanson, Victoria Hanson, and Ole Fagerhaugh, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Douglas and Victoria Hanson and Ole Fagerhaugh, interview by Carl Ross, July 17, 1981, 45–46, Minnesota Historical Society.

458.⁵⁰ Unmentioned in Ross' remarks are the black leaders of either local, their role in these victories and what they thought about the merger.

Section 4: Anthony Cassius: "I headed everything in Minneapolis"

Anthony Brutus Cassius was born on June 29, 1907 in Meridian, Oklahoma. After completing eighth grade, he moved to Minnesota at the age of 13. Cassius graduating at the top of his class in 1926. College scholarships were out of the question for black students so Cassius enrolled in Macalester's Department of Religious Education on a reduced fee in the fall of 1927. After a year at Macalester, Cassius decided he was "ill-cast [for college]" and left to wait tables at the Curtis Hotel in 1929. Cassius explains he decided to work at the Curtis Hotel because it would enable him, "...to make my mark in the labor movement".⁵¹ In the oral history, Cassius highlights the central role he played in forming Local 614 by contrasting himself with the other less educated, reluctant to organize black waiters:

I thought, "This can't be right, we working here 'cause our faces are black for \$17 a month." So I attempted to organize, which was very difficult because black people were afraid of organizations. The only organizations that they knew anything about was the churches and a few lodges, and it was awful hard to sell it to them. But through persistence and effort and having a few blacks in the Curtis Hotel who had finished high school [I] was able to talk to them and get some kind of understanding.⁵²

Some of those "black people [who] were afraid of organizations" probably had worked at Curtis in the last failed organizing attempt—only five years earlier—and had ample reason to distrust white unions. In his setting up the story, Cassius suggests that only he knew that "this can't be

⁵⁰ Carl Ross, "Remarks to Memorial Celebration for Bob Kelly," June 17, 1990, 2–3, Carl Ross Papers, Box 2, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁵¹ Anthony Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, interview by Carl Ross, December 1, 1981, 3, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁵² Ibid.

right”, implying only he could recognize this injustice. In the end Cassius was able to “sell it to them” and convince his fellow waiters to organize.

Cassius repeatedly sets up himself up as an exception to the black waiters involved in the organizing in 1918 and 1923: he has none of standard black “apathy toward unions”, he is willing to turn to whites for assistance in organizing—even Leslie Sinton of Local 458—and while he lacks experience with unions, he has the initiative to overcome this. Responding to Ross’ question of what gave him the idea to organize, Cassius explained, “...I didn’t have any experience [organizing a labor union] but I always had a lot of initiative”. Even Local 458’s refusal to admit him did little to dampen this initiative, with Cassius responding defiantly, “I’ll organize a union myself”.⁵³ Cassius later comments that his organizing core were all, “...Minnesotan people, high school graduates” and ascribed the success to “having a few blacks in the Curtis Hotel who had finished high school”, emphasizing both their education and their non-migrant status.⁵⁴ As Local 614 expanded to the Andrews Hotel, Cassius’ core members again remained college educated waiters: “...his sons were very intelligent young men who were both college graduates [William E. Cratic and unknown second son]. But they didn’t have no jobs because that time there were no jobs here for black college graduates so they were waiting tables, too. They became very friendly and very interested in the labor movement”.⁵⁵ Cassius portrays himself as an exception to the other black waiters, who, not having his college education, lacked the consciousness of their oppressed position and thus failed to organize.

⁵³ Ibid., 3, 6.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 4.

Additionally, by integrating himself into the Minneapolis labor movement, Cassius fulfills the vanguard role, seeing himself as leading others toward change.⁵⁶ The *Twin Cities Herald* gave the credit of Local 614's victory over the Curtis Hotel to Cassius, praising him for "...the thoroughness with which he has integrated himself into the labor movement".⁵⁷ The *Minneapolis Spokesperson* expanded on the victory: "The united support given Local 614 by other Minneapolis unions should have a marked effect upon the Negro's confidence in labor unions".⁵⁸ The reduction of the victory to the individual actions of Cassius and the claim it encouraged other blacks to organize further strengthen the idea of Cassius as the vanguard. In his oral history, Cassius notes how exceptional his actions were: "I headed everything in Minneapolis: the Local Joint Executive Board, president of my local, secretary of my local, on the State Federation of Labor. It was just unheard of, blacks participating on the level that I participated on".⁵⁹ Cassius served as a national delegate at the 1936 HERE convention in Rochester, New York and was hired as an organizer by Local 665 in 1938.⁶⁰ Cassius said in his interview that he "...had the respect of the entire labor movement", something that was truly "unheard of" for a black man in Minnesota.⁶¹ Cassius won impressive victories for Local 614 and in doing so, gained recognition both among blacks and in the white labor community.

⁵⁶ Much of Cassius' rhetoric is similar to that of the National Negro Congress (NNC). See Chapter 4 for more about the NNC. His connection to the NNC is unknown but they were aware of him. HERE Secretary-Treasurer Ishmael Flory recommended Cassius as an organizer to NNC president John Davis in a letter in 1939. See Ishmael P. Flory to John P. Davis, May 4, 1939, 10. "F", *African America*, Communists, and the National Negro Congress, 1933-1947., Papers of the National Negro Congress, Schomburg Center, New York Public Library.

⁵⁷ "Curtis Hotel Waiters Gain Victory," *Twin-City Herald*, March 2, 1940.

⁵⁸ "Curtis Hotel Waiters Union Sign Agreement Including \$3,500 Back Pay," *Minneapolis Spokesperson*, March 1, 1940.

⁵⁹ Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, 42.

⁶⁰ "Local Delegates Off to Rochester Meet," *Minneapolis Labor Review*, August 7, 1936; John F. Thomas, "Campaign Plans Outlined," *Minneapolis Spokesperson*, May 26, 1939.

⁶¹ Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, 6.

In his oral history, Cassius goes beyond merely describing his integration into the labor movement and inserts himself personally into a larger labor history. When asked by Ross if he remembered the beginning of the Local 665, Cassius replied, “Do I remember? I was one of the key movers of it being organized”.⁶² After the interviewer suggests they stop for the day because he has no more questions, Cassius pauses for a second before starting a long monologue. The pause hints at the careful planning Cassius put into his statement. He shared a YMCA room with the Reuther brothers, famous organizers of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). He was in San Francisco when Harry Bridges was indicted for throwing a bomb. He heard American Federation of Labor (AFL) president Samuel Gompers speak. He cooked meals in his spare time for striking Teamsters in 1934. Every name Ross mentioned—Ross himself a veteran of the Minneapolis labor movement—Cassius personally knew. In a statement that conflated the labor movement’s success with his own, Cassius recalled, “I had the potential, if I’d stayed in the labor movement, of being a great man, a big man in it anyway”.⁶³

Delton argues that Cassius, by inserting himself into labor history, constructs himself as “...a mover of history, defying the passive destiny to which, he felt, his racial identity bound him”.⁶⁴ Cassius gains power from this, shifting his identity from an ordinary black waiter to a powerful union leader. That the Curtis Hotel fired him four times and that the FBI investigated him only further demonstrated that he was a powerful individual. Everyone who was somebody in the labor movement was investigated by the FBI and Ross even comments mid-interview this “puts him [Cassius] in good company”.⁶⁵ By highlighting his role as an exception and vanguard

⁶² Ibid., 7.

⁶³ Ibid., 29.

⁶⁴ Delton, *Making Minnesota Liberal*, 69.

⁶⁵ Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, 13.

among the black waiters at Curtis, Cassius feels he transcends a strictly racial identity to an identity as a labor leader. This is best demonstrated when Cassius leaves the labor movement to open a bar. The bank vice president laughed at his request for a loan but after a few minutes alone with the bank president, Cassius secured the loan, recalling the bank president telling him, “I believe you’ll make it. Everybody else that’s in the labor movement’ll make it and I like your style”.⁶⁶ Delton argues that Cassius sets up the story so his identity as a union leader was the key factor in his success: the bankers laughed at the idea of a black man getting a loan, but as a union leader he got the loan.⁶⁷ Cassius explains this anecdote points to the difference, “...in big men and small men; the small man laughed at me”.⁶⁸ Cassius, an educated black man, felt racism had forced him into job that was beneath him and implied the “small men” mistakenly saw him as merely a black man, compared to the “big men” who acknowledged his identity as a union leader. Cassius’ bar, the Dreamland Café, became a gathering spot for Minneapolis blacks.⁶⁹

Cassius recalls numerous racist interactions that arose during his organizing. During a bargaining session, the lawyer representing the Minneapolis Hotel Association, Lloyd MacAloon, told Cassius “he ought to be thankful”. When Cassius asked him what he should be thankful for, MacAloon shook his finger in his face and said, “That’s a bad statement to make. First of all, you must remember you’re a black man”. Ross and Cassius discuss the absurdity of MacAloon’s scolding that the black hotel waiters should grateful for their low wages and mistreatment.⁷⁰ Once when eating with Raymond Wright, the president of Local 665, at the Mun

⁶⁶ Ibid., 13–14.

⁶⁷ Delton, *Making Minnesota Liberal*, 69.

⁶⁸ Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, 14.

⁶⁹ “Anthony Cassius, Black Bartender-Philosopher, Dead at 76,” *Star Tribune*, August 4, 1983, Minnesota Historical Society; Nelson Peery, *Black Fire: The Making of an American Revolutionary* (New York: New Press :, 1994), 19.

⁷⁰ Cassius, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Brutus Cassius, 26.

Hing Cafeteria, a waiter refused to serve Cassius. At the time, Cassius was president of the HERE Local Joint Board and personally knew the owner. After Cassius “raised so much hell”, the owner offered him a free meal but Cassius turned it down, explaining that he only wanted “everybody being treated the same”.⁷¹ When criticizing the segregated black auxiliary of the Minnesota machinists union, Cassius said, “So here they [sit] in a little isolated black group... [they’d] meet, pay dues and give it up to the white man and get nothing”.⁷² By using passive language such as “sit” and “give it up to the white man”, Cassius ascribes as much blame to the black mechanics—apparently lacking his own initiative—as he does to the white union leadership.

The necessary sacrifice for Cassius to maintain the status he had gained was distancing himself from his blackness—including confronting union racism—to ensure he was “racially comfortable” to white leadership. Cassius never directly comments on racism within HERE, most blatantly Local 458’s refusing him membership. In the late 1930s, Cassius helped Maceo Littlejohn’ union of black dining car waiters in St. Paul affiliate with HERE to become Local 556. Cassius explains how Maceo Littlejohn was passed over for HERE vice-president-at-large because he was black, remarking that “Maceo Littlejohn should have been rightfully the first vice-president” but still, this story remains centered on Cassius’ influence, not the racism that prevented Littlejohn from receiving a national position.⁷³ When attending a HERE convention in Cincinnati, the hotel for delegates refused to give Cassius a room. After HERE threatened to move the convention, Cassius was given a room but the other sixty black delegates had to find other accommodations. Cassius never explains why HERE tolerated this, instead using the story

⁷¹ Ibid., 31.

⁷² Ibid., 21.

⁷³ Ibid., 17.

to emphasis how he decided to speak up and got the other Minneapolis delegates to support him.⁷⁴ This may have been purposeful, as the interview was for an official history of Local 665 and Cassius and Ross could have wished to avoid tarnishing its legacy. However, if Cassius was equally silent on union racism during his time as a labor leader, he may have been more easily tolerated by white unionists. Unlike the black leadership blamed for the failed organizing of black waiters in 1918 and 1923, Cassius displays none of the “distrust of white officers” and “apathy toward unionism” that threatened the white Minneapolis labor movement’s ability to organize black workers.

Section 5: Albert Allen: “I Became Al to Him”

Albert Allen was born in Hannibal, Missouri in 1913 and moved with his family to Minneapolis at age 4. He graduated from North High School in 1929 and briefly attended the University of Minnesota.⁷⁵ Throughout his oral history, Allen draws a distinction between being “an individual” and being “a Negro”. A star tennis player during high school, Allen was well known by other players, which allowed him to “...sometimes go in some communities, especially in the way of playing of tennis in which at that time there possibly very few Negroes that played tennis, and if I were two blocks off course, it was one of those things of feeling the brunt of being a Negro and if I had been on the other side I would have been Allen”. Allen explained people who knew him from tennis “treated me as an individual” but once outside that network, he became “one of those well those there was a derogatory term but I would say here it was a Negro”.⁷⁶ This fascination with escaping a constraining racial identity is repeated in

⁷⁴ Ibid., 31–32.

⁷⁵ Albert Allen, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Albert V. Allen, Jr., interview by Carl Ross, June 17, 1981, 1, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 1–2. Repeated words original.

Allen's interview. In high school, he wrote a story titled "The Man Without a Race", where a white passing black was envied for "leaving his race" and was exposed as passing by a jealous black domestic worker.⁷⁷ Allen later describes an anecdote about how a cemetery plot salesman tried to sell him a plot near where other blacks were buried and Allen told him, "Look, if you want to sell to Negroes don't tell them that so and so's over there, a Negro's going to tell you...I don't want to be there, I want to [over] there...trying to get away from being categorized".⁷⁸

When Allen began working at the Minneapolis Athletic Club, he tried to recreate what he viewed as his non-racialized athlete identity. Allen worked as an athletic coordinator—a prominent position for a black—arranging strategic tennis and handball matches between potential business clients. With his success arranging matches, Allen came to be respected by a number of Minneapolis elites, to whom Allen explains, "I was never 'that boy', I was Allen".⁷⁹ As a result, Allen saw himself as an integral part of the wheeling's and dealings of Minneapolis business elites.⁸⁰ Because Allen had broken out of the traditionally black departments like bellboy, elevator operator and waiter, other black workers looked up to him.⁸¹ In 1933, the Athletic Club eliminated its assistant physical director and shifted the job responsibilities to Allen. Allen had currently earned \$65 a month but instead of raising his salary to \$185 a month the assistant physical director had previously earned, Allen's salary was cut to \$59.85 a month plus sales commission. This shook Allen's view of the world. Allen explains he had previously believed in the "rugged individual" who started at the bottom and worked their way through hard work and sheer ability and thus was "really anti-union".⁸² At the encouragement of George

⁷⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁸¹ Nellie Stone Johnson, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, interview by Hyman Berman et al., March 1, 1988, 17, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁸² Allen, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Albert V. Allen, Jr., 6.

Naumoff, who eventually became president of Local 665, Allen asked for a raise. The manager refused, telling Allen it was because “Your skin is black”.⁸³ In 1939, Allen meet Local 665 organizer Swan Assarson, who convinced Allen to attend an organizing meeting. Allen, unsold on the union, recalls thinking as he arrived at the meeting, “you’ll never been able to organize the capitalistic stronghold of Minneapolis, all these businessman this that and the other”. Meeting in a dark room of “foreign born” unionists, Allen worried that “there’s no power here”.⁸⁴

Despite agreeing to help organize the union, Allen remained ambivalent until one day his boss learned of Allen’s involvement with the union. Confronting Allen, his boss told him he thought Allen was “more intelligent than to get mixed up in something like this” foreigner rabble rousing.⁸⁵ As his boss rattled off entire ethnic groups that supposedly supported the union, Allen realizes he could easily add to this list “and those niggers” because someone with those prejudices against immigrants would likely harbor racist views about blacks. Because Allen was close to management, they assumed he would agree to be an informant and told him, “Now I got you. Bring me...”. Allen exploded, yelling “God dam you! I’m not going to be no informer to you!”⁸⁶ Allen’s response seems typical with his refusal to be pigeon holed into roles other people assume about him. Connecting this back to his desire to be seen as an individual, not just another black man, Allen explains, “A person can accept you as an individual and then suddenly he’s blind to everything, suddenly his eyes open up and he sees the color of your skin, he suddenly realizes he’s talking to me and he goes ah, and I wanted to say and those niggers”.⁸⁷

⁸³ Naumoff, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with George Naumoff, 25–26.

⁸⁴ Allen, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Albert V. Allen, Jr., 7.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁶ Naumoff, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with George Naumoff, 26.

⁸⁷ Allen, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Albert V. Allen, Jr., 8.

His boss proved to Allen, that despite all his hard work at the Athletic Club, he could never escape the ever present racism of management alone. If his boss wasn't willing to see immigrant workers as individuals, just lumping entire ethnicities together and blaming them for forming a union, a black man had no hope to be seen as more than just a black man.

To Allen, joining a union ensured his individual ability would be recognized. In a workplace with just a few employees, individual ability is noticed and rewarded by management. However, Allen explains, once you're just a member of a group of employees, "the boss doesn't know you, you're just a number...that's all".⁸⁸ While Allen doesn't mention this, the invisibility of black service workers only exacerbated this impossibility of individuality in a workplace. To Allen, a union allowed blacks to "come in as just as individuals with anyone else".⁸⁹ Describing meeting Assarson, Allen said "he had a smile on his face and when he looked at you he would look directly into your eyes, you knew he was a very attentive listener, because he just listened, and the smile just remained there".⁹⁰ This willingness by Local 665 organizers to treat Allen as an equal—as an "individual" who wished to escape his racial identity—won him over to Local 665.

During a union election, Allen recalled a white member ranting "I respect him [Allen] for his intelligence and I know he knows a lot about unionism and I don't know a damn thing about it, but I just can't see a nigger being...president of a union". Allen uses this story to reinforce how a union allowed him to escape the constraints, he felt, his racial identity bound him. Allen won the election and over time, organizing alongside this white member, Allen "lost [his] identification of being a nigger and I became Al to him and a very close friend".⁹¹ Unlike

⁸⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Allen points to Local 614 at the Curtis Hotel as an example of a union he wouldn't have joined.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 14.

Cassius, Allen remained in the labor movement, organizing with Local 665 until 1942 and then leading the Clerical Workers Union Local 3105 at the Minneapolis airport. Allen was heavily involved with civil-rights organizations, including serving as president of the Minneapolis NAACP from 1946 to 1950. Like Cassius, he attributed his success in life to the labor movement and the opportunity it gave him to be an individual.⁹²

Section 6: Nellie Stone Johnson: “If you’re smart enough to demand collection!”

Nellie Stone Johnson was born in 1905 in Lakeville, Minnesota on a small farm, the oldest child of six.⁹³ Her family was politically active: her mother taught her children black history, her father helped found the Farmer-Labor Party and an uncle organized for the BSCP, a bible in one hand and Karl Marx in the other.⁹⁴ At seventeen, Johnson moved to Minneapolis, working at a variety of hotels and clubs before landing a job as a service elevator operator at the Minneapolis Athletic Club, where she met Local 665 organizer George Naumoff.⁹⁵ Operating a service elevator and thus in constant contact with much of the workforce, Johnson was ideally placed to organize her co-workers.⁹⁶ Despite her boss telling the Athletic Club workers anyone attending a union meeting would be fired, Johnson went anyway. When her boss confronted her about attending, he backtracked and now told she’d be fired if she joined. Winning this first confrontation with management encouraged Johnson.⁹⁷ By the time Local 665 had won at

⁹² Delton, “Labor, Politics, and African American Identity in Minneapolis, 1930-50,” 426.

⁹³ Nellie Stone Johnson, Minnesota Black History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, interview by David Taylor, July 15, 1975, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁹⁴ Johnson, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, March 1, 1988, 2, 6; Johnson, Minnesota Black History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, 5.

⁹⁵ Johnson, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, March 1, 1988, 5.

⁹⁶ Johnson, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, November 17, 1981, 1.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

recognition at the Athletic Club, the labor movement quickly became Johnson's life, who saw the potential to "become very powerful in labor and politics".⁹⁸

Johnson was a prominent figure in Local 665, remaining with the union long after Allen and Cassius moved on. When George Naumoff was fired by the Minneapolis Athletic Club in 1942, Johnson's signature was the first on the petition demanding he be hired back.⁹⁹ A manager once warned Johnson:

"You, Nellie, are on the spot. Mr. Arnold [the manager] has his finger on you. If he gets on your car and he sees a shoe string of yours not tied right or if your uniform does not look right or your hair is not right, he wants you fired—all because you belong to that union and hold that office... You know the pressure that Albert Allen got from Mr. Arnold when he held that office and worked here and the treatment he has given other that have been active in the union. Nellie, you still have to be careful".¹⁰⁰

Johnson responded by a filing a grievance with her two co-workers as witnesses, writing in the grievance statement, "Mr. Arnold is doing this to scare me. I don't scare easily when I know I am doing the right thing and giving service to the best of my ability".¹⁰¹ During the first contract negotiations at the Athletic Club, tensions arose because black majority departments received two weeks paid vacation while several white departments received only one. Johnson convinced her co-workers to give up a week paid vacation to make the standard equal for every worker. The next year, Local 665 won a contract with two weeks for everyone.¹⁰² Johnson wrote

⁹⁸ I dislike the heavy editing by David Brauer in this book but original transcriptions or recordings are not available. Nellie Stone Johnson and David Brauer, *Nellie Stone Johnson: The Life of an Activist* (Saint Paul, Minn.: Ruminator Books, 2000), 112.

⁹⁹ to C. Arnold, "[George Naumoff Petition]," 1942, Doug Hall's Papers, Hotel and Restaurant Employees Local 665 folder, Minnesota Historical Society.

¹⁰⁰ Nellie Stone Johnson, "[Grievance Statement]," December 1, 1942, Doug Hall's Papers, Hotel and Restaurant Employees Local 665 folder, Minnesota Historical Society.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Johnson, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, November 17, 1981, 6.

columns the Local 665 newsletter summarizing important political events for union members and letters to the editor of the *Minneapolis Spokesman* rallying support for civil rights bills.¹⁰³

However, as a black woman in a white man's labor movement, Johnson faced additional constraints even with her position as vice president, explaining that, "Very few [women] had an opportunity to, you know, get into higher office...In fact, if you looked like you wanted to be president they thought, 'Put you in the booby hatch' or something".¹⁰⁴ Raymond Wright, president of Local 665, entirely forgot about Johnson's role in ending segregated employee dining rooms and has to be reminded by Carl Ross mid-interview.¹⁰⁵ When Ross brings up Johnson's role in pushing Local 665 to play a more "...progressive role with regard to women's issues", Wright just becomes confused.¹⁰⁶ As a member of Local 665's executive committee, Johnson served on the entertainment committee, explaining, "I didn't care what the office was! What I'm known for in Minnesota is that all you have to do is make Nellie Stone Johnson thirty-second vice president and I'll gather all the power I need!...Most us women leaders kind of slipped in the back door. The back door was the lesser offices...I knew that being a voting member of the executive board, I could do what I wanted".¹⁰⁷ Constrained by her gender, Johnson's path to leadership in Local 665 was less straightforward than Allen or Cassius because she could not be seen as seeking power.

Johnson successfully used her seat on Local 665's entertainment committee to advance her organizing goals. The social functions of the union proved ideal for bringing union

¹⁰³ Hotel & Restaurant Employees Local 665, "Union News," March 1945, Lloyd M. MacAloon's Papers, Minnesota Historical Society; Nellie Stone, "Jim Crow Is a Hitler Weapon," *Minneapolis Spokesperson*, April 16, 1943.

¹⁰⁴ Johnson, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, March 1, 1988, 8.

¹⁰⁵ Raymond Wright, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Raymond R. Wright, interview by Carl Ross, November 1, 1981, 72, 74, Minnesota Historical Society.

¹⁰⁶ In Wright's defense, he seems confused for most of interview. *Ibid.*, 80–81.

¹⁰⁷ Johnson and Brauer, *Nellie Stone Johnson*, 110–111.

members' families into a progressive movement.¹⁰⁸ In 1939, Johnson pushed the CLU to support Minneapolis hiring black teachers. To increase the public pressure to pass the resolution, Johnson explains, "I didn't put that in resolution form in front of my own union, which you were supposed to do first. I just took it to the Central Body floor. But when I did bring it up there, then six or seven other people from my union, well, they hit the ground running to build up support. I was not a gutless person at all when it comes to dealing with humanity".¹⁰⁹ Soon after the resolution passed, Minneapolis integrated its teaching ranks. Johnson and her allies used their leadership positions to push Local 665 and the CLU to take positions the unions otherwise would have avoided. Avoiding bureaucratic structures meant to prevent such tactics was not without risk: "Those things were hard because you always would risk bringing ninety percent of the delegation down on your head—the men part—and you didn't know if you'd get tripped going down the stairs".¹¹⁰ This discussion of the risk of internal dissent is nearly entirely absent in Cassius and Allen's interviews, suggesting it was not formative for them. Cassius and Allen's privilege is evident in their ability to recall a largely depoliticized experience within their unions.

Johnson skirts the narrative of exceptionalism and "vanguard" heavily present Cassius and Allen's interviews. When Johnson was fired for the first time from the Athletic Club, she found a job at the West Hotel. Describing her time working there, Johnson explained, "I never tried to organize a union at the West. See, at the Athletic Club, among the people I wanted to help, the vision was greater—the people wanted to be organized, be real human beings. We didn't have that many types of people at the West...There were stronger human relations among the employees at the Athletic Club, much stronger".¹¹¹ While the comment that the "vision was

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 110.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 112.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 78.

greater” at the Athletic Club is similar to Cassius, the last line explains “stronger human relations” was why the Athletic Club could organize and not the West Hotel. Instead of setting herself up as better than the West Hotel workers because of her understanding of unions or college education, Johnson explains the ability to organize or not with workplace factors.

In a different interview, when asked if it was difficult to convince blacks to join unions, Johnson responded, “Yes, I think it was, because there was a lack of understanding and there was a question about that they don’t want us; that a lot of blacks had bought the propaganda that the white labor person didn’t want them...my position was I didn’t care whether they wanted me or not. This is where I belonged if I’m going to do myself economically and politically any good”.¹¹² Again, Johnson’s answer that she hadn’t “bought the propaganda” like other blacks could be interpreted as setting herself up as a vanguard. However, the distinction here is that Johnson’s answer does not set up a narrative of leading unenlightened black workers into the union. Allen and Cassius never articulate an overtly political motive for organizing. Johnson’s answer is not a criticism of other black workers—instead, she acknowledged the union racism, the decision not to join a union and explains she decided to organize despite union racism because it was the best option to advance her political goals. Unlike Johnson, Cassius and Allen’s interviews show they cared a lot about whether the “white labor person” wanted them or not.

All three used their leadership positions to simultaneously advance issues concerning black hotel workers and their personal agendas. While Cassius successfully rallied white labor unions to support Local 614 and Allen organized Athletic Club workers to join Local 665, they never explicitly state this as their goal. All four interviews with Johnson have a very explicit

¹¹² Johnson, Minnesota Black History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, 13.

narrative of advocacy for economic and racial justice. In one interview, Johnson says, “This is what I mean about organizing—even in our union, you had to win positions of leadership to get everyone lifted up”.¹¹³ That type of statement we never see from Cassius or Allen. Johnson’s leadership in Local 665 and the CLU put her in contact Minnesota’s rising political star, Hubert Humphrey. In 1945, Johnson was elected to the Minneapolis library board and Humphrey was elected mayor of Minneapolis. Describing her relationship with Humphry, Johnson said, “What I didn’t realize is that Hubert was hanging on to me as much as I was hanging on to him. By then, I had been elected to the Local 665 board, one of five delegates from our local to the Central Labor Body. That was where the union power was—for me to get waiters and busboys jobs. But for him, he looked at my delegate spot and saw a way to get to a hundred and eighty thousand affiliated people in the Twin Cities and Minnesota”.¹¹⁴ Johnson quickly put her influence to work, “I do think that rubbing elbows with the likes of me pushed Hubert Humphrey toward the great 1948 speech he made about civil rights at the Democratic convention...Hubert Humphrey listened when I talked about it [civil rights]”.¹¹⁵

Recalling a Local 665 executive board member who later became a close friend, Johnson explained this person first thought “they got their window dressing there [referring to Johnson]” but then after their first meeting together, quickly changed his mind: “I heard you open your mouth and bellow out and I realized you weren’t what I thought you were”.¹¹⁶ Johnson uses this story to highlight her successes on the Local 665 executive board, contrasting herself with Ann Manley, a vice president of Local 458, “Ann was an ordinary hardworking gal, she did not have too much vision but she was nice and believed in treating people right. She learned ten times

¹¹³ Johnson and Brauer, *Nellie Stone Johnson*, 114–115.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 116–117.

from me what I learned from her”.¹¹⁷ Later on in the interview, Johnson elaborates, saying that during her time as vice president, “I knew I was window dressing—but I wanted that vote on the board! They expected a token but I turned out to be an activist animal!...When they trot you out, even if they expect you to be window dressing, it means they owe you—if you’re smart enough to demand collection! In this case, a lot of ladies thought I had too much clout precisely because I wasn’t window dressing enough”.¹¹⁸ More subtle than Cassius, Johnson still does set herself up as an exception to white women in leadership because she was “smart enough to demand collection”. However, unlike Cassius, who explained his “exceptionalism” with his education, Johnson points to her identity as a black woman, explaining, “One advantage I had over most of our membership was that I was a minority person. I had to understand what it took to stay afloat in this society, politically. Unfortunately, most of the white women didn’t have a clue of what they could use to get power and opportunity. For me, organization was always the key”.¹¹⁹ Johnson uses the interview to argue that the additional challenges facing her as she organized a union and was elected to leadership gave an understanding of obtaining and using power that white women—and while not overtly stated, white and black men—for the large part lacked.

Like Cassius and Allen, Johnson benefited from the labor movement as an alternative and more satisfying path in life than her job as an elevator operator but refused to move beyond her role as a rank and file activist. Delton argues this resistance to elected or staff positions “made the labor movement for her more genuine; she herself embodied a dedicated, active and informed rank and file”.¹²⁰ The relative anonymity of Johnson’s rank and file position allowed her to avoid the divisive ideological and factional fights of the era’s labor movement. In an interview,

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 110.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 204.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 112.

¹²⁰ Delton, “Forging a Northern Strategy,” 140.

Johnson explained her frustration with ideological debates during the Teamster strike, “Everything seemed to get involved about philosophy, some ideology, rather than of the just needs of the workers. One day I went down and I thought, ‘They haven’t talked about what the strike was all about.’ It really disgusted me, really. I don’t know how right I was I know that my instincts were that should never have happened”.¹²¹ Priding herself on her political pragmatism, Johnson remained focused on using the labor movement to advance social and economic change.

Despite an investigation by the national AFL office into communists and pro-CIO sentiments in Local 665, Johnson still managed to support the CIO, explaining “Even though I was an AF of L member, I did an awful lot of work behind the scenes for the CIO...I used to leave our meeting at 665 and go over to Harmon Place to the old CIO hall and run off all of their leaflets for the next day’s plant distribution there...Oh, if [AFL President William] Bill Green had caught up to at that time he’d have excommunicated us, gosh”.¹²² However, Johnson’s involvement in the Young Communist League resulted in her being targeted. In 1950, Johnson lost her election for Local 665 vice president to Eddie Larson, described by the *Minneapolis Tribune* as the “final step in ridding the local of leftwing officers”.¹²³ Johnson took her defeat in stride, “Eddie Larson was someone that the conservative white establishment put up against me. This was part of the effort to brainwash blacks and Jews against radicals. I understood that those union people who voted against me were smart! Because they wanted to eat and feed their

¹²¹ Johnson, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, March 1, 1988.

¹²² William F. Wright to William Green, July 2, 1941, Minnesota-related correspondence of William Green, 1936-1947, Minnesota Historical Society; Johnson, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Nellie Stone Johnson, March 1, 1988, 28. Johnson’s comment was met with laughter from the interviewers. William F. Wright appears unrelated to Raymond and Cal Wright of Local 665.

¹²³ Johnson and Brauer, *Nellie Stone Johnson*, 155–156.

families and get a good education”.¹²⁴ Johnson remained active in Local 665 but disaffiliated from her leftist parties in order to stay focused on her political goals.

Conclusion

In Section 1, Trouillot in *Silencing the Past* and Maynes, Pierce and Laslett in *Telling Stories*, argue that oral histories allow us to examine alternative and often marginalized viewpoints who provide a vital “witness” to history. Maynes, Pierce and Laslett and Friedlander’s *The Emergence of a UAW Local* point out how both the motivations of the interview participant and how they recall their life stories offer important clues to a deeper analysis. In *Black Workers Remember*, Honey builds upon the role of memory in shaping personal recollections. Section 2 explains Gaines’ theory of racial uplift to offer a background context on which to evaluate the leadership of Local 614 and 665. I expanded on Gaines with Childs’ theory of a vanguard and connected this to Carbado and Gulati’s *Acting White*, Friedlander’s study of the UAW and Delton’s existing research on black unionists in Minnesota. In Section 2, I briefly examined Carl Ross and how he shaped the interviews he conducted.

Section 3, 4, and 5 Cassius, Allen and Johnson used their oral histories to contrast themselves with other black workers by pointing to their initiative in organizing and their involvement in the larger labor movement. Cassius, Allen and Johnson operated as individuals within larger collectivist structures, adopting unionism as a path toward leadership, recognition and individuality and highlighting the broad diversity of the motivations and ideologies that informed black union activists. Cassius, always the entrepreneur, organized Local 614 when he felt trapped by his race and class. Using his oral history to create a narrative of himself as this

¹²⁴ Ibid., 157.

exceptional individual or “vanguard” Cassius explains how the status he gained in a white labor movement allowed him to exit the labor movement after getting a loan. Allen joined Local 665 to create the non-racialized or colorblind identity he felt he had achieved as an athlete. Johnson, underestimated by white leadership in Local 665, used her spot on the executive board to advance a political agenda directed at the needs of Minneapolis blacks and build relations with up and coming politicians like Humphrey. Johnson’s identity as a black woman prevented her from accessing the advantages respectability rhetoric—dependent on middle-class patriarchal ideals—offered Cassius and BSCP.

Overall, leaders like Johnson, Allen and Cassius saw the labor movement, despite its racism and other flaws, as an integrating force that could pull a neglected black community into the political mainstream. Exemplifying how hotel unionism in Minneapolis acted as an integrating force, Johnson explains in her interview that Local 665 “created [an] entirely different atmosphere for people to get to know each other and be associated with each other and have very personal relationships...trade unionism just brings about everything, once people can get [that] everything that pertains to humanity comes out of the trade union movement”.¹²⁵ In stark contrast to Chapter 2’s explanation of how hotels served as one of few sites whites and blacks interacted in Minneapolis during this time period, the relationships Local 614 and Local 665’s black membership developed with white unionists broke down the invisibility and facelessness of racialized service work. Johnson, Cassius and Allen had very diverse goals in their participation in the labor movement—some of which argue for an expansion of our understanding of why people decide to organize labor unions—but overall their involvement functions as a rejection of Minneapolis hotels’ attempts to market a slavery fantasy.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 21.

Chapter 6.

Reexamining Who Gets to be a Leader

Returning to the Curtis Hotel postcard in Chapter 1, with its empty dining room that asks customers to imagine the workers they want to serve them, we can subvert this imagining process. Instead of naturally subservient waiters the Curtis Hotel wants us to fantasize, we can fill in the empty space with stories of militant unions and creative organizing tactics that drastically shifted what hotel labor looked like in Minneapolis. But as the years pass and Local 614 and Local 665 and even the existence of the Curtis Hotel itself fade from memory, the possibilities of this reimagining become limited. Lipsitz's fear of erasure of the working-class from popular consciousness becomes very present in Minnesota. Ora Lee Patterson, wife of the president of the HERE Local 516 in St. Paul, lamented in an oral history that it was the doctors and lawyers who were recognized, never the union activists: "Those people who were well-known people were of course the doctors, the lawyers, people like that, who got recognition. If you were a police chief, deputy police chief or if you were one of the first Black firefighters, you were in that camp. But Pullman Porters and the unions were the unrecognized leaders".¹ In schools lessons about the history of blacks in Minnesota, the significance of Local 614 and Local 665 goes unrecognized. At the same, in the story of the 1934 Teamster strike and how Minneapolis became a "union town", black service workers are never part of the conversation.

While the members of Local 614 and Local 665 are, Patterson puts it, the "unrecognized leaders", certain people were more unrecognized than others. When historians ask questions about leaders, this implicitly raises asks who falls outside normative views of leaders. Cassius,

¹ Capitalization original. The reference to firefighters seems to be a dig at Matthew Little. Jerry Abraham, *Voices from Minnesota: Short Biographies from Thirty-Two Senior Citizens* (Elk River, MN: DeForest Press, 2004), 204.

Allen and Johnson achieved impressive victories leading Local 614 and Local 665 but their experiences are atypical. Of the hundreds of black hotel workers in Minneapolis, the vast majority never held an official leadership position. Even for those who were elected to union leadership, public recognition is sparse. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Local 614 had at least six presidents: Samuel Harris, Albert Raglin, Anthony Cassius, Robert Mallory, James Robinson and Merton Ewing. James Robinson and Merton Ewing are only ever mentioned in archived letters.² Albert Raglin, Samuel Harris and Robert Mallory each had a single mention of being Local 614's president—and in each article, Cassius is also mentioned.³ On the same day an article in the *Minneapolis Spokesman* praised Mallory as the “firm hand behind Waiters’ Union No. 614”, an article on the same page outlining Local 614’s victory over the Curtis Hotel gives the bulk of the credit to Cassius, describing him as the “principal figure in bolstering the stand of 614” and relegates Mallory to a lengthy list of involved union officials.⁴ It is entirely likely Cassius, Allen and Johnson were better organizers and fully deserve the spotlight. However, because this essay seeks to address how the labor movement offered a few black hotel workers in Minneapolis a path to leadership and recognition, it is important to address other factors that may have shaped who was able to obtain leadership and who could not.

My methodology limits my ability to answer this question. Delton’s single chapter in her thesis and subsequent article is the only scholarly literature to discuss black union organizing in Minnesota. The only black hotel workers Carl Ross interviewed were Cassius, Allen and

² James A Robinson and George Naumoff to A.J. Kilday, November 12, 1941, Central Labor Union of Minneapolis, Box 11, Minnesota Historical Society; Leonard W. Johnson to Donald C. Peterson and Raymond Wright, May 2, 1947, Lloyd M. MacAloon’s Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.

³ “Waiters’ Local Hosts Banquet for Porters’ Union Leader,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, November 30, 1934; “Local 614,” *Twin City Herald*, October 3, 1936; “Reader Selects Ten Most Outstanding Negroes for Year 1939 in Twin Cities,” *Minneapolis Spokesperson*, March 1, 1940; “Curtis Hotel Waiters Union Sign Agreement Including \$3,500 Back Pay,” *Minneapolis Spokesperson*, March 1, 1940.

⁴ “Reader Selects Ten Most Outstanding Negroes for Year 1939 in Twin Cities”; “Curtis Hotel Waiters Union Sign Agreement Including \$3,500 Back Pay.”

Johnson. There are no interviews with individuals not in official leadership for comparison. My dependence on newspapers and union archives creates a bias towards these institutions and people with official leadership positions. Cassius in particular seems very good at attracting media, likely aided by having his bar across the street from the *Minneapolis Spokesman's* office. It is important to keep in mind that not all black hotel waiters were militant, class-conscious, union and civil rights leaders. However, Kelley cautions that, even for black union members, labor unions were merely a small part of the various formal and informal avenues through which people acted to improve daily life. For a worker to accept reformist union strategies while stealing from work, to fight streetcar conductors while voting against a strike or to attend church or a dance rather than a union mass meeting is not necessarily a sign of “immature” class conscious, Kelley writes, but instead “...reflects the multiple ways working people live, experience and interpret the world around them”.⁵ Because of the limitations my methodology imposes, though, it is not possible for me to break from traditional definitions of what is political. While not ideal, I made a conscious choice to accept Ross’ decision about who was important in Local 614 and Local 665 and use that as my starting point to examine how this definition of leadership is exclusionary.

The 1934 HERE convention in Minneapolis helps us situate the contradictions within union organizing for black hotel workers. Delegates from Local 614 helped pass resolutions addressing HERE’s policy of segregated locals. However, the choice of the Curtis Hotel for the convention is significant because it acted as a site of racial production. The members of Local 614 could easily have ended up waiting on HERE delegates. In Chapter 2, I write that the commitment of the luxury hotel to flattering its wealthy clientele extended beyond the menu and

⁵ Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 34.

the food to every aspect of service, including the race of the waiters. White nostalgia for southern genteel culture made recreating this slavery fantasy an attractive marketing method to emphasize the luxurious atmosphere of a hotel. Service workers had to perform servility for customers to create and maintain this atmosphere. Blacks who did not fit the tropes of racialized service—invisible, dignified, anticipating needs—could be locked out of these hotel jobs because they would not be seen as properly displaying the luxury of the hotel.

Chapter 3 explored the history of blacks in Minnesota, complicating the narrative of “northern racial innocence”. The most critical factors for blacks in Minnesota was their small number and the importance of hotels as employers. The steady income, the symbolic distance from menial labor and the association with wealthy and white customers gave service jobs in luxury establishments a level of prestige. Census records for Minneapolis showed that black hotel workers and especially union hotel workers had the trappings of middle-class respectability: home ownership, education, and living in the right part of town, further confirming the status these jobs held. However, blacks had not moved north to wait tables—they went north to improve their place in America. Trapped by the limitations of Minnesota’s racism and stifling black community, certain individuals turned to union organizing, their personal and political aspirations informed by the demographic realities of the region.

Chapter 4 began with Local 614’s victory over the Curtis Hotel, ending wage discrimination between black and white workers in Minneapolis. The victory demonstrated how the Minneapolis labor movement in the 1930s and 1940s existed as a site of simultaneous struggle for inclusion, access and influence for black workers in Minneapolis. Local 614 and Local 665 formed during a period of immense debate among workers, intellectuals and union officials over the role of black workers in unions and what those unions should look like. The

earlier failed organizing in Minneapolis, national debates within HERE about integration, and Philip Randolph's overly simplistic analysis of racism all informed political decisions by Local 614 and Local 665's leadership. As these unions gained political power, they pushed Minnesota's civil-rights organizations to adopt priorities more in line with the needs of black workers. B.D. Amis ouster in Philadelphia and conflicts arising from disparate education levels between white and black red caps in Chicago hint at the thin line black labor leaders treaded.

Chapter 5 started with a literature review of scholarship examining ideologies of black leadership. Gaines explained that "racial uplift" faulted working-class blacks for their lower status. Black elites held themselves up as evidence of "race progress" in hopes of gaining acceptance from whites. Migration posed a threat to elite status, as migrant blacks began to disrupt a carefully constructed narrative of black progress dependent on respectability. Hawkins' work on the BSCP suggests that Minneapolis hotel workers could have emphasized middle-class respectability by disparaging certain aspects of black working-class culture in their struggle against hotels that utilized racial caricature and submissive stereotypes to market their luxury. Childs explained that enlightened black leadership—the "vanguard"—believed they alone understood the economic roots of racism and could lead the masses of black workers to overcome their distrust of unions. Finally, Carbado and Gulati argued that black success in white dominated institutions required balancing supplying racial comfort, negating racial stereotypes by presenting themselves as "racial exceptions" and being racially palatable to whites.

To answer these questions about leadership I turn to oral histories with Cassius, Allen and Johnson, because, read carefully, these personal narratives can "provide unique insights into the connections between individual life trajectories and collective forces and institutions beyond

the individual”.⁶ Cassius, most explicitly employing racial uplift rhetoric as he creates a narrative of himself as a vanguard, uses his oral history to situate himself as an exception to the other black workers. By successfully integrating himself into the Minneapolis labor movement, Cassius feels he transcends a strictly racial identity to an identity as a labor leader. The necessary sacrifice for Cassius to maintain the status he had gained was to ensure he was racially comfortable to white leadership by not addressing union racism. Allen, desiring to escape the pigeonholing he felt his race constrained him to, viewed Local 665 as a place where he could be seen as a non-racialized individual. Johnson had very different, more overtly political goals—shaped by the additional constraints she faced being a black woman—but still saw labor as a way to advance her individual political agenda, connecting her to important politicians. Johnsons’ comparisons to white union women does set her up as an “exception” but because Johnson explains this by emphasizing the unique understanding her identity allowed her, it does not function as a “vanguard” like Cassius. Overall all three saw labor as an integrating force, both in the opportunities it presented them as individuals and in agendas for which they fought—as something that could pull a secluded black community into the political and economic mainstream. Labor unions made them relevant to the city of Minneapolis.

For black hotel workers, the ability to conform to middle-class patriarchal norms was jeopardized by the servility inherent in their jobs as waiters. The prestige of hotel jobs fading, and trapped between performing plantation culture at work and a parochial community at home, union organizing represented what seemed as a chance to escape both for certain hotel workers in Minneapolis. Facing the challenge of fighting for a living wage and social status against companies that relied heavily on racial caricature and submissive stereotypes, the black

⁶ Mary Jo. Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara. Laslett, *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 3.

leadership of Local 614 and 665 adopted certain aspects of respectability. These hotel workers had a job with a uniform, a union and often a college education in return they wanted a stable income, to own a house, raise a family and get recognition in the community. Local 614 and Local 665 members rejected stereotypes of servility in favor of a new image of the militant, masculine urban black working man. At the same time, respectability links labor and citizenship through labor organizations, creating an almost “working class aristocracy” where successful organizers who were able to “pull themselves up by the bootstraps” become fodder to shame others. The racism and sexism Cassius, Allen and Johnson faced in labor movement risks becoming downplayed.

Returning to the start of this chapter, Robert Mallory, a president of Local 614, provides an excellent example of the limitations on what leadership could look like. There is no reason to think Mallory was any less ambitious than Cassius, Allen or Johnson. Mallory was heavily involved in the DFL, remained active in Local 614 longer than Cassius and unsuccessfully ran for Minneapolis Park Board of Commissioners four years before Johnson was elected.⁷ Mallory laid out his personal philosophy of racial uplift in a book titled *The Builders' School*. Blaming the moral character of blacks for their marginalized position in society, Mallory wrote that racism could only be effectively challenged “...by a better class of men and women of all races... in accord with the eternal laws. The fish of the seas have leaders. The fowls of the air have leaders. The greater races of the universe are united and have leaders but you people are

⁷ “Mallory Campaign Underway for Park Board,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, April 25, 1941, Minnesota Historical Society; “Mallory Opens Campaign Office,” *Twin City Leader*, April 26, 1941, Minnesota Historical Society; “Cost Of Living Meet Tonight At 8:00 P.M.,” *Minneapolis Labor Review*, August 15, 1941; “All-Party Group Is Formed for Re-Election,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, October 17, 1944, Minnesota Historical Society; “7th Ward DFL Club Will Meet Tuesday,” *Minneapolis Labor Review*, March 14, 1946.

divided and have none that you feel you should respect”.⁸ This type of rhetoric, while more religious than Cassius, can be seen as advocating for a “vanguard” that Mallory feels blacks lack.

Within the archives of the Curtis Hotel’s lawyer I found a clue to why Mallory never achieved the same status as Cassius, Allen or Johnson. Following the victory at the Curtis Hotel, management retaliated by increasing the workload of the waiters, claiming that “the workers should work in such a way that the hotel could get the money back”.⁹ Tensions escalated and in the fall of 1941, Mallory was fired for swearing at a white chef and was only rehired after arbitration.¹⁰ Swearing at a boss is an act of resistance, a rejection of the assumption of the invisibility and docility of black workers.¹¹ Because black waiters’ claim to middle-class respectability was constantly contested, certain forms of resistance are deemed “illegitimate” because they threaten the image Local 614 and 665 had cultivated as highly professional waiters. Mallory’s emotional outburst is inconsistent with the scientific, reserved vanguard approach to racism and thus is threatening to the white Minneapolis labor movement. For the Curtis Hotel, this type of militancy risked disrupting the slavery fantasy of its guests, undercutting its image of luxury. In part, the success of black leadership of Local 614 and 665 hinged on their ability to keep whites comfortable. We see this when Local 458 has Local 614 members at the Nicollet

⁸ I assume this is the correct Robert Mallory because the book includes references to St. Peters AME, a black church in south Minneapolis and to working in a hotel. Robert. Mallory, *The Builders’ Schools: A Solution of the Negro Problem.*, 1st ed. (Builders’ Committee on Economical and General Education, 1931), 59–61.

⁹ Doug Hall, “Doug Hall’s Papers” (Minneapolis, MN, n.d.), Local Joint Executive Board of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Alliance folder, Minnesota Historical Society; Herbert Howell, “Minnesota: Minneapolis, Minn.,” *The Chicago Defender*, March 16, 1940.

¹⁰ It is possible Mallory punched a manager as well. Anthony Cassius to Lloyd MacAloon, November 13, 1941, Lloyd M. MacAloon’s Papers, Minnesota Historical Society; Lloyd MacAloon to Robert Mallory and Colored Waiters Union, November 29, 1941, Lloyd M. MacAloon’s Papers, Minnesota Historical Society; Anthony Cassius to Lloyd M MacAloon, December 2, 1941, Lloyd M. MacAloon’s Papers, Minnesota Historical Society; Raymond Wright, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project: Interview with Raymond R. Wright, interview by Carl Ross, November 1, 1981, 73, Minnesota Historical Society.

¹¹ Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 3–10.

Hotel fired, when B.D. Amis is ousted and Local 758 in Philadelphia destroyed and when Cassius in his oral history never comments on Local 458's refusal to give him membership.

In another variation, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the filmmaker and photographer Gordon Parks worked at the Minnesota Club in St. Paul in the 1930s. Working at the Minnesota Club allowed Parks steal books and newspapers from the club library. What music did waiters hear at the Curtis Hotel or Minneapolis Athletic Club? What books and politics did they hear discussed? What famous artists and writers did they meet? Social capital or culture capital acquired at work can be transferred through unions or between friends at the local bar. None of this is viewed as political.

Robert Mallory and Gordon Parks' "resistance" falls outside traditional definitions of labor struggles so it becomes seen as politically immature or illegitimate. Robin Kelley argues the invisibility of these types of resistance is the result of attempts by historians attempting to "redeem" the black working-class from racist stereotypes. Racist ideology redefined resistance like swearing at managers or theft and absenteeism as natural traits of inept, lazy and immoral blacks. Historians responded by assuming all blacks lived by Protestant work ethnics, which Kelley dismisses: "If we regard most work as alienating, especially when performed in a context of racial and sexist oppression, then we should expect black working people to minimize labor with as little economic loss as possible".¹² The leadership of Local 614 and 665, while marginalized as blacks in a very white labor movement, still got to set the tone of what resistance should like in newspaper articles and their Minnesota Historical Society oral histories. Related to ideals of respectability, only workers who followed the rules can be seen as a leaders in a sanitized version of history. Mallory never had the position to tell an interviewer about the time

¹² Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (June 1, 1993): 21, doi:10.2307/2079698.

he was fired by the Curtis Hotel and won his job back, something Cassius proudly recalls. History remembers the strikes and union officials, not the stolen newspapers passed between friends or the coffee mug handles broken in protest.

In summary, organizing offered an opportunity to rise from just another subservient migrant black waiter to a powerful union leader, gaining status both within a mostly white labor movement and the class-stratified black Minnesotan community. Unions represented progress and educated thinking for the college educated waiters employed at Minneapolis hotels. To navigate a job implicated in a slavery fantasy by white customers required the invocation of respectability—generally at odds with the militant working-class politics of unions—by black hotel workers, whose ability to conform to middle-class patriarchal norms would otherwise be jeopardized. Black union leadership's need to uphold respectability narrowed the terms by which Local 614 and Local 665 members could be seen as leaders. The experiences of black hotel workers in Minneapolis were rife with contradictions: servility and dignity; individualism and collectivism; militancy and respectability; the performance of racial scripts, on the one hand, and the willingness of employers to replace black workers with white workers, on the other; that black workers faced demeaning treatment in their work, but that they also fought to keep those jobs; independent racially-based organization and the quest for integration into the unions. I cannot fully resolve these contradictions but they nevertheless motivated and limited Local 614 and Local 665's membership and leadership's choices, challenges and behaviors.

The story of Local 614 and Local 665 deepens our understanding of the complicated position of black workers in the 1930s labor movement by illuminating how black service workers navigated these contradictions at the workplace, in their union and in the larger black community in Minneapolis. Historical memory shifts what is seen as possible and by telling a

different story of Minnesota, I expand what is imagined as possible. The small number of blacks living in Minnesota means there are few narratives of visible black resistance. Local 614 and Local 665, beyond merely surviving, resist and advance demands, providing a counter-narrative to whitewashed histories of Minnesota. For black freedom study scholars, the respectability and masculinity that shaped who could be remembered as leaders in Local 614 and Local 665 highlights the importance of careful scholarship to reframe our understanding of what is political. For labor historians, Local 614 and Local 665 were part of the AFL, raising questioning the relevancy of debates between craft and industrial unionism. We all know the story of the 1934 Teamster strike—how can we retell Minnesota labor history to include black service workers? For workers organizing today, connections between slavery and service work made clear by the story of Local 614 and Local 665 underscore the importance of challenging the entire practice of tipping and give even more significance to these struggles.

Future research must look beyond black leadership of unions to the experiences of rank-and-file membership. The Minneapolis labor movement gave black union leadership a sense of individuality because it integrated them into the local movement as individuals with agency. However, as this final chapter explains, much of that individuality was limited to a few certain individuals operating in a narrow, traditional definition of what is “political”. Was Cassius’ emphasis of his role as a “vanguard” widespread among college educated waiters? Were they able to insert themselves into the larger labor movement with as much ease? Did rank-and-file members of Local 614 and Local 665 feel the same constraints of blackness Allen felt and seek to replace their racial identity with a unionist identity? What was the experience of black women not on Local 665 executive committee like Johnson? The future inclusion of oral histories with rank-and-file membership of Local 614 and Local 665 should attempt to answer these questions.

At the moment, rank-and-file blacks appear as mere passive objects, excluded by racist white unionists and manipulated by black union leadership. The task ahead for historians is to integrate the experiences, perspectives and voices of both black union leadership and black rank-and-file membership into larger narratives of labor history.

These issues continue to haunt us today. I was delighted to see a Facebook post celebrating Black History Month by both UNITE HERE, the successor to HERE, and Governor Dayton. Governor Dayton's Facebook page posted several bios of famous black Minnesotans, including Nellie Stone Johnson:

Johnson was a civil rights and labor union leader who organized against workplace discrimination, advocated for Greater Minnesota's farmers and supported the passage of Minnesota's Fair Housing and Fair Employment laws. When the New Deal was enacted, Johnson worked to end gender pay inequities in the hotel and restaurant industry and pushed to end segregation of locker rooms and eating facilities at the Minneapolis Athletic Club.¹³

Later in the month, UNITE HERE posted photos of Amtrak dining car workers, members of Local 43, along with the caption:

Before the famous Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters first organized, another group of African-American railroad workers helped them get their start... The Dining Car Employees Union first joined HERE in the early 1900s. For decades, the Dining Car Employees and Pullman porters were the only unions in the United States of mostly African-American membership. These two unions actively fought for their rights as workers while battling discrimination from the railroad industry and even other unions.¹⁴

It was good to see Nellie Stone Johnson and dining car workers be recognized for their achievements. However, while Dayton's post states Johnson was a union leader, it never

¹³ "Governor Mark Dayton & Lt. Governor Tina Smith's Facebook Page," *Facebook*, February 8, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/GovMarkDayton/photos/a.188546714508433.50837.186151651414606/1224091140953980/?type=3&theater>.

¹⁴ "UNITE HERE!'s Facebook Page," *Facebook*, February 29, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/UniteHere/photos/a.247841957874.140071.27478282874/10153536829347875/?type=3&theater>.

explains what that actually meant. By listing the changes Local 665 achieved at the Minneapolis Athletic Club after the mention of the New Deal, those victories are decontextualized and made to seem like legislative changes, not part of a larger civil rights struggle undertaken by Local 665. Discriminatory pay and segregated workplaces in Minneapolis hotels and clubs was halted by years of organizing, with some workers losing their jobs in retaliation. By downplaying the significance of Johnson's union leadership and not even mentioning Local 665, Dayton's post contributes to the erasure of labor history and the early civil rights history of Minnesota. This returns to Patterson's quote at the start of this chapter: to be recognized, you had to be something other than a union activist.

Similarly, while UNITE HERE's post notes that "the Dining Car Employees and Pullman porters were the only unions in the United States of mostly African-American membership", it fails to explain why exactly so few union members were black or the role HERE had in excluding black hotel workers. The post mentions these unions fought discrimination from "other unions". Those "other unions" were UNITE HERE, who actively tried to destroy the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters during the 1930s and forced dining car waiters to form separate locals. In their post, UNITE HERE continues a long-standing tradition of whitewashing labor history, refusing to address how decades of racism, exclusion and violence shape union membership and leadership today. This critique is not meant to say Dayton or UNITE HERE should not have made those posts. Nellie Stone Johnson and dining car workers deserve to be remembered and celebrated. I choose to include these two posts to show the importance of Local 614 and Local 665 in the retelling labor and Minnesota history.

As I write, the continued invisibility of service workers of color enables the Minneapolis City Council to dismiss #MplsWorks—a campaign for fair scheduling, paid sick time, a \$15

minimum wage and a crackdown on wage theft—as “solutions in search of a problem”, dismissing minimum wage work as something only teenagers are paid. Metropolitan State University Professor Kathleen Cole writes that the city council has “prioritized the desires of more privileged groups who temporarily work in low-wage jobs for wine and cookies over the needs of community members for whom these jobs pay for rent, groceries, and utilities”.¹⁵ Nancy Goldman and Martin Goff, president and vice president, respectively, of UNITE HERE Local 17, criticized the #MplsWorks campaign as “just plain old wrongheaded”, writing that “best answer for changing the employment conditions of lower wage workers is to organize a union”.¹⁶ It is true that low wage workers would be best off in a union but most people, organizing a union is not currently feasible. Just as Local 614 and Local 665 set the tone for what “legitimate” resistance by black hotel workers should look in newspapers and oral histories, Local 17’s response continues a legacy of erasure of struggle outside of traditional labor unions by labelling electoral strategies as illegitimate.

The types of jobs Local 614 and Local 665 organized were and are still low wage, unstable and dominated by people of color, many of whom are immigrants. The history of these workers is a history of continued underemployment, persistent low-wage jobs and the challenges of organizing in the service industry. Local 614 and Local 665 purposefully organized what were and still are widely viewed as “dead-end” jobs. Returning to the question of audience, the historical memory of the victories and losses of Local 614 and Local 665 shift what we imagine as possible. In the 1930s, the motivations of hotels in hiring black workers was very clear and

¹⁵ Kathleen Cole, “Minneapolis’ Choice: Are We Going to Be One City or Two?,” *MinnPost*, October 28, 2015, sec. COMMUNITY VOICES, <https://www.minnpost.com/community-voices/2015/10/minneapolis-choice-are-we-going-be-one-city-or-two>.

¹⁶ Ironically, this editorial is posted to Local 17’s website under an article describing the Nellie Stone Johnson scholarship. Nancy Goldman and Martin Goff, “What Is the Best Alternative for Lower-Wage Workers?,” *Workday Minnesota*, October 17, 2015, <http://www.workdayminnesota.org/commentary/what-best-alternative-lower-wage-workers>.

informed the organizing of these workers. Today, the workplace conditions organizing by fast food workers and the \$15 minimum wage movement responds to remains tied to slavery and unfree labor. Articulating the historical connections 1930s black hotel workers in Minneapolis understood makes more visible the racist structures we organize against. For labor unions, expanding what is imagined possible should push them to question underlying assumptions about what service work could look like. Local 614 and Local 665 organized during an era when tipping was continued existence was questioned. Today, that unions have allowed tipping to continue as a practice remained trapped by a narrow view of what is possible. Goldman and Goff of Local 17 conclude their editorial by writing, “Give a man a fish, he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime”.¹⁷ This statement ignores that black service workers have struggled against their employers since before the state of Minnesota was founded and will continue to do, with or without a union. We should be organizing against the very ideas of servility, dependency and legacy of slavery that underpins tipping and service work—with a \$15 minimum wage a good first step—and not telling workers they should be content with the status quo.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Appendix A: Black Hotel Worker Census Records

Last Name	First Name	Gender	Place of Birth	Age	Address	Own/Rent?	Marital Status	Education	Occupation	Union Member
Adair	Thomas	M	Alabama	25	3029 1st Ave S	Rent	Married	H2	Porter	
Albert	Allen Jr. L	M	Missouri	28	3904 5th Ave S	Own	Married	C1	Handball Attendant	Yes
Allen	LeRoy	M	Missouri	32	2625 Clinton Ave S	Rent	Widowed	H3	Waiter	
Allen (Johnson)	Nellie Stone	F	Minnesota	34	3313 4th Ave S	Rent	Single	H1	Elevator Operator	Yes
Ampey	Oliver	M	Iowa	38	215 1st Street N	Rent	Single	8	Porter	
Andrews	Julius	M	Illinois	24	906 Bryant Avenue N	Rent	Married	H2	Bellhop	
Bannsen	Floyd	M	Oklahoma	31	526 Aldrick Ave N	Rent	Single	8	Elevator Operator	
Bentley	Georgia	F	Missouri	50	110 Highland Place	Rent	Married	5	Maid	
Blackwell	Edward, Jr	M	Minnesota	20	3817 4th S.		Single	4H	Bellhop	Yes
Blair	Robert	M	Minnesota	20	3912 Clinton Ave	Rent	Single	8	Bellboy	
Bradshaw	Malcolm	M	Jamaica	44	566 W Central Ave. St Paul	Own	Married		Waiter	Yes
Brady	Donald J. Sr	M	Minnesota	48	3900 5th Ave S.	Own	Married	H4		Yes
Braggs	Marshall	M	Texas	49	na	Rent	Married	8	Waiter	
Bridges	Elmer	M	Kansas	42	535 6th Ave N	Rent	Married	6	Waiter	
Brooks	Hatty	F	Arkansas	46	1001 Bryant Ave N	Rent	Married	8	Maid	
Brooks	Lewis	M	Georgia	55	215 1st Street N	Rent	No	H1	Waiter	
Brown	Angela	M	Minnesota	19	3315 Chicago Ave S	Rent	Single	H2	Busboy	
Brown	Oscar A	M	Kansas	49	409 E Franklin Ave	Rent	Divorced	8	Houseman	

Last Name	First Name	Gender	Place of Birth	Age	Address	Own/Rent?	Marital Status	Education	Occupation	Union Member
Bryant	Leroy	M	Iowa	38	na	Rent	Single	H1	Porter	
Burnaugh	Claude W.	M	Minnesota	29	1011 6th Ave No 1223	Rent	Married	C3	Waiter	
Carter	James	M	Kansas	51	Washington Ave S	Rent	No	5	Waiter	
Cassius	Anthony	M	Oklahoma	32	4026 Clinton Ave S.	Rent	Married	C1	Waiter	Yes
Cassius	Florence	F	Minnesota	27	4026 Clinton Ave S.	Rent	Married	H2	Waiter	
Clark	Nathaniel	M	Louisiana	32	3032 4th Avenue S	Rent	No	H4	Waiter	
Collins	Harry	M	Iowa	63	246 4th Ave S	Rent	Single	8	Porter	
Cratic	William E	M	Minnesota	26	3935 4th Ave S	Rent	Married	6	Porter	Yes
Cratic	William D	M	Illinois	64	3323 Chicago Ave S.		Married		Waiter	Yes
Davis	Osceola	F	Alabama	21	726 Fremont Ave N	Rent	Married	H1	Maid	
Dearing	Ernest	M	Virginia	56	3836 Clinton Ave S	Own	Married	8	Doorman	
Ellis	James	M	Indiana	38	626 Girard Ave N	Rent	Single	H4	Waiter	Yes
Ewing	Merton	M	Kentucky	48	104 Highland Ave	Rent	Single	8	Waiter	Yes
Freeman	Louise	F	Tennessee	44	119 Royalston Avenue	Own	Married	H4	Elevator Operator	Yes
Garrett	Joe R	M	Texas	33	637 6th Ave N	Rent	Single	8	Waiter	
Gates	George W.	M	Alabama	49	706 Oak Lake Ave N	Rent	Single	8	Porter	

Last Name	First Name	Gender	Place of Birth	Age	Address	Own/Rent?	Marital Status	Education	Occupation	Union Member
Glenn	John A	M	Mississippi South	66	3833 Clinton Avenue S	Own	Married	0	Waiter	Yes
Hall	Edward	M	Dakota	49	2201 5th Ave S	Rent	Divorced	8	Bellboy	
Harris	Samuel O.	M	Oklahoma	36	2430 5th Ave S	Rent	Married	C3		Yes
Hayes	Edward	M	Nebraska	37	3908 5th Ave S.	Own	Married	H4	Waiter	Yes
Henderson	Naomi	F	Louisiana	42	na	Rent	Married	H4	Maid	
Holliday	Chaney	F	Mississippi	46	3327 Chicago Avenue S	Own	Married	H1	Maid	
Holmes	Philps	M	Louisiana	46	715 7th Ave N	Rent	Single	4	Waiter	
Houser	Noble L.	M	Kentucky	55	257 Rondo St. St. Paul	Rent	Divorced	C2	Waiter	Yes
Houser	Beatrice	F	Missouri	53	257 Rondo St. St. Paul	Rent	Divorced	7	Maid	
Howard	Estella	F	Alabama	52	3529 4th Ave S	Own	Widowed	8	Maid	
Hunter	Cecila	F	Nebraska	48	1400 14th Ave S	Rent	Widowed	7	Maid	
Jackson	Robert L	M	Louisiana	24	104 Royalston Ave N	Rent	Single	H3	Porter	
Jackson	Harold	M	Minnesota	28	529 Dupont Ave N	Rent	Divorced	8	Bellboy	
Jackson	Phillip	M	Missouri	35	83 Hoag Avenue	Rent	Married	8	Porter	
Johnson	Grace	F	Missouri	39	610 Sixth Ave N	Rent	Married	8	Maid	
Johnson	Clyde	M	Iowa	42	2629 Stevens Avenue	Rent	Married	H3	Waiter	
Jones	Alan	M	California	38	707 6th Av North	Rent	Single	H4	Porter	

Last Name	First Name	Gender	Place of Birth	Age	Address	Own/Rent?	Marital Status	Education	Occupation	Union Member
Kendrick	Thomas	M	Washington DC	33	909 E 22nd St	Rent	Single	6	Porter	
Larey	Henry	M	Illinois	45	512 Colfax Av N	Rent	Married	6	Porter	
Lassley	James	M	Michigan	21	511 North Bryant Ave	Rent	Single	H1	Waiter	
Lewis	Anna	F	Wisconsin	36	4959 Humboldt Ave N	Own	Divorced	8	Elevator Operator	
Lewis	Harry	M	Iowa	40	305 North Aldrick Ave	Rent	Married	8	Waiter	
Little	Matthew W.	M	Washington DC	19				C4	Waiter	Yes
Lucas	Charles	M	Minnesota	35	409 East 39th Street	Rent	Married	H3	Waiter	
Mallory	Robert A	M	Mississippi	55	4053 Clinton Avenue S	Own	Married	H1	Waiter	Yes
Marshall	Edward	M	Kansas	47	3609 Elliot Ave S	Own	Married	H2	Waiter	
Martin	Ernest	M	Georgia	33	2024 Cedar Avenue S	Rent	Single	0	Porter	
Mathias	Clark	M	Louisiana	32	3032 4th Ave S	Rent	Married	H4	Waiter	
Maves	Floyd	M	Iowa	49	3816 4th Ave S	Rent	Married	8	Waiter	Yes
McClure	Albert J	M	Minnesota	25	1017 5th Street S	Rent	Married	C4	Bellhop	
McGrew	Elizabeth	F	Iowa	27	724 Bryant Ave N	Rent	Married	7	Maid	
McKeether	Matthew	M	Louisiana	48	612 North 7th Street	Rent	Married	5	Porter	Yes
Monroe	Arthur	M	Oklahoma	45	3808 5th Ave S	Rent	Single	H3	Waiter	

Last Name	First Name	Gender	Place of Birth	Age	Address	Own/Rent?	Marital Status	Education	Occupation	Union Member
Morrow	Beryl W	M	Kansas	56	3833 4th Ave S	Rent	Married	H2	Doorman	Yes
Mudd	Marie	F	Ohio	43	620 7th Ave N	Rent	Divorced	8	Elevator Operator	Yes
Neath	Corelle	M	Alabama	25	525 Lyndale Ave North	Rent	Married	H2	Waiter	
Nelson	John	M	Louisiana	23	2929 5th Ave	Rent	Married	8	Doorman	
Nixon	George W	M	Arkansas	52	na	Own	Married	C2	Doorman	Yes
North	Alfred	M	Tennessee	48	480 Rondo St., St. Paul	Rent	Single	H2	Waiter	Yes
Pettiford	Arthur	M	Missouri	48	814 4th Ave N	Rent	Widowed			Yes
Pierre	Robert L.	M	Minnesota	28	3824 4th Ave S	Rent	Single	H1	Bellboy	
Pittman	Harvey C	M	Minnesota	24	3812 4th Ave S	Rent	Single	H3	Waiter	Yes
Posten	William	M	Kansas	33	715 Lyndale Ave N	Rent	Single	H1	Waiter	
Powell	Earnest	M	Kansas	37	na	Rent	Single	H2	Waiter	
Price	John	M	North Carolina	62	518 5th Avenue	Rent	Married	C1	Doorman	
Raglin	Albert J	M	Missouri	52	3032 4th Ave S		Widowed	C2	Waiter	Yes
Randell	Wilbur	M	Illinois	36	1012 Bryant Ave N	Rent	Married	8	Waiter	Yes
Reavely	Gross	M	Minnesota	64	3517 4th Ave	Rent	Single	8	Waiter	
Rice	Edmund	M	Minnesota	31	514 Aldrick Ave North	Rent	Married	8	Porter	
Richardson	Winston	M	Missouri	27	3319 Chicago Ave S		Single	C2	Waiter	
Richter	Martha	F	Minnesota	51	11 Highland Place	Rent	Married	3	Maid	
Roberson	William D.	M	Kansas	33	82 Highland Place	Rent	Married	8	Porter	

Last Name	First Name	Gender	Place of Birth	Age	Address	Own/Rent?	Marital Status	Education	Occupation	Union Member
Robertson	James A	M	Kentucky	33	2201 5th Ave S	Rent	Married	C4	Waiter	
Robinson	James A	M	Kentucky	31	1316 SE 4th St	Rent	Single		Waiter	Yes
Route	George	M	Missouri	61	607 8th Ave N	Rent	Single	6	Houseman	
Russell	Edna	F	Kansas	43	2201 5th Ave S	Rent	Married	H2	Elevator Operator	
Sessions	Gus	M	Texas	56	3641 Clinton Ave S	Rent	Married	5	Waiter	Yes
Shepard	William	M	Missouri	47	812 North 14th Ave	Rent	Married	H4	Waiter	
Smith	Jimmy	M	Missouri	28	76 Highland Place	Rent	Single	8	Waiter	
Snadon	Abe	M	Tennessee	67	1070 Bryant Ave N	Rent	Married	4	Waiter	Yes
Spaulding	Walter	M	Iowa	47	595 Highland Place	Rent	Married	H1	Porter	
Steverson	Curtis	M	Texas	27	2438 5th Ave South	Rent	Married	H2	Porter	
Thomas	John F.	M	Minnesota	32	1909 6th Ave N	Rent	Single	C4	Waiter	Yes
Tillman	Luculte	F	Minnesota	50	3525 4th Ave S	Rent	Single	C3	Maid	
Turner	Jessie	F	Mississippi	52	2905 5th Ave S	Rent	Widowed	7	Maid	
Tyson	Alma	F	Alabama	35	76 Highland Place	Rent	Single	8	Maid	
Wilbert	Josephine	F	Alabama	35	3327 Chicago Avenue S	Rent	Married	8	Maid	
Williams	Roberson	M	Kansas	33	82 Highland Place	Rent	Married	8	Porter	
Willis	Robert	M	Texas	60	1814 15th Ave S	Own	Married	H4	Doorman	

Last Name	First Name	Gender	Place of Birth	Age	Address	Own/Rent?	Marital Status	Education	Occupation	Union Member
Wilson	Cornelius	M	Missouri	45	511 Calfax Ave N	Rent	Widowed	8	Doorman	
Wright	Wilbert J	M	Minnesota	23	1209 5th Ave N		Single	H2	Waiter	
Wynn	Robert Leon	M	Minnesota	38	2201 5th Ave S	Rent	Divorced	8	Doorman	
Young	Leonard	M	Minnesota	27	na		Single	H1	Waiter	
Young	Leola	F	Missouri	36	1833 Franklin Avenue E	Rent	Married	H2	Maid	

Appendix B: Minneapolis Tribune Classified Ads, 1934-1939

Date	Section	Ad Text
2/4/34	Help Wanted-Men Hotel and Restaurants	Experienced hotel man, preferably Scandinavian for 50-room Washington ave S. hotel. State experience and references.
3/11/34	Positions Wtd-Women Hotel and Restaurants	Middleaged Scandinavian lady, exp. in baking or meat cook.
4/23/34	Help Wanted-Women Hotel and Restaurants	Lady cook, waitress and colored porter for country hotel.
5/15/34	Help Wanted-Women Hotel and Restaurants	Young neat colored girl to care for ladies restroom in café.
6/3/34	Help Wanted-Men Hotel and Restaurants	Want colored cook & wife kitchen in small country hotel, state lowest wages.
7/8/34	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Exp. Scand woman wants dishwashing in café, hotel, club.
7/15/34	Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Chef-Working, Germ, American, good all around man. Satisfaction, references in & out of city.
8/5/34	Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Cook (Scand) \$50 Bd. Rm.
8/19/34	Help Wanted-Women Hotel and Restaurants	Waits (4) \$40-50, A-1 Exp & App.
8/19/34	Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Caretkrs. \$60. (Scand couple 45), A-1. All service
10/28/34	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	3 COLORED women wanted chambermaid work of any kind.
10/28/34	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Exp. Danish lady cook wants work, good references
10/28/34	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Experienced waitress, age 27. blonde. needs work badly.
11/18/34	Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	First class, white male cook wishes position with hotel. Will go out of town. References furnished.
12/2/34	Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Exp. hotel porter wants work. good ref. sober. wages \$10 week
12/30/34	Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	FILIPINO chef wants work, hotel, restaurant or private family.
2/2/35	Help Wanted-Men Hotel and Restaurants	All around cook for country hotel, white or colored. State age, exp, qualifications & wages.
2/3/35	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Neat, honest, exp waitress wishes work. Refs.
2/10/35	Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Chef, col., A-1, wants work, has hotel café & dining car experience. Can furnish 20 years' reference. Will consider any kitchen work.
4/7/35	Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Resaurants	When in need of chefs, cooks, waiters, waitreses call Hotel. Rest. Employee's Ass'n. 520 Henn.

Date	Section	Ad Text
7/14/35	Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Strong white girl, must be good worker. Steady position, \$8 & rm. Inquire after 2. Aster Hotel.
8/11/35	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	YOUNG SCANDINAVIAN WID NEEDS DAY WORK BADLY
10/13/35	Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants	5 GIRLS with waitress experience, single or married. Include photograph.
10/20/35	Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Exp colored chef. Hotel, restaurant & night club. Gd. Ref.
10/27/35	Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Wanted exp. White man for gen. hotel work, New Gayety Hotel
2/9/36	Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Wanted-Experienced bus boy and dishwasher. Neat.
2/9/36	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Good cook, colored, wants pos. or assis in kitchen
3/22/36	Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Waiter, age 32, exp, union member desires position.
4/19/36	Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Night maid for small hotel. Alert, over 35 & white.
5/10/36	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Neat colored girl wants maid work in hotel or housework. Can furnish references.
5/17/36	Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Maid wanted, Polish preferred. Must be reliable. Hoffman Hotel.
5/31/36	Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Colored woman for maid work in hotel. Exp. & refer.
6/7/36	Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Exp colored man. good cook and gen worker. wants rest or porter work.
6/12/36	Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Nightman that wishes permanent position in small refined Mpls hotel. We offer good home, board, laundry and small comp. Must be refined, clean habits and alert. Ref. Age about 65.
9/6/36	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Exp. Scandinavian lady wishes to rent kitchen or take care of apartment hotel.
9/13/36	Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	COLORED MAN, married, wants position as cook, hotel or restaurant. Will leave city. Can furnish A-1 ref.
11/8/36	Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Waitress for new concern. Age 20-25. Complexion light. Ht 5'6' or 5'7'. Enclose snapshot. Ref.
1/7/37	Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	ALL-ROUND hotel & café kitchen man wants work. Colored.
3/7/37	Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Exp. Hotel night clerk, give complete information about yourself.
3/14/37	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Exp. colored lady cook, in or out of city. Nite club, hotel or restaurant pref. References. Will come at once. Miss Summerville.
3/14/37	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	EXPIERENCED middle-aged colored woman wants chamber work or 2nd work. BR.

Date	Section	Ad Text
5/16/37	Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Wanted waitress, must be Union. Camel's Club.
5/16/37	Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Want Polish lady dishwasher, young. Lakeview Café.
10/10/37	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Exp. Colored woman, age 36, fishes chambermaid work.
5/9/38	Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Clerk-Nite (38-48, weight 175-200) \$75. Porter-Col'd. Sal-Tips, \$65. Fare Pd. Wilcken Employment Burea.
6/5/38	Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants	2 Neat appearing colored girls for cigar counter and check room.
6/19/38	Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Cook \$100--Small Hotel. Fare PD. Porter. Colored good for \$60. Fare Pd. Wilcken Employment.
7/3/38	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Woman of refinement and ability seeks position as hotel, inst. or resort hskpr. or position where executive business experience & mature judgement will be appreciated. Exceptional ref. as to ability & character.
11/12/38	Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Combination night watchman & bellboy for hotel. \$40 month & tips. Must be husky, some hotel experience desirable. Permanent job. Enclose full picture, if possible.
1/1/39	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Exp colored woman wants 1/2 day hotel, maid work or short order cook. City ref.
2/5/39	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Colored woman wants work in hotel or rooming house
3/5/39	Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Bartender, age 29, neat, fast, rel, 5-years exp. Mix drinks. Union.
4/9/39	Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Waiter wanted, age 24 to 27, experienced in hotel and party service. Sober, pleasant personality and ability to become manager. King Melody Club.
4/9/39	Help Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Wanted, 3 union bartenders close to city. Ref. Ex-service men pref, sober.
6/25/39	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Exp competent German girl wants work in club or institution.
8/6/39	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Colored girl, exp chambermaid, waitress, daywork, 25c hr, tokens
8/13/39	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Colored woman wants chambermaid work in hotel or daywork
8/20/39	Positions Wanted-Men Hotels and Restaurants	Experienced Swiss cook, 24, wishes work in institution, hospital, hotel, etc. Ref.
10/21/39	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Exp colored girl wants pos as maid in hotel, apt or rest rm.
11/5/39	Positions Wtd-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Rel neat colored girl, 29, wants day work or waitress work.
11/5/39	Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Cooks (Scand), Waits, Pantry Help. Annex Employment.

Date	Section	Ad Text
12/17/39	Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Scandinavian cook for restaurant. 50 miles from Mpls. Mature woman, capable, widow or single.
12/31/39	Help Wanted-Women Hotels and Restaurants	Colored reliable waitress, call Justrite Bar-B-Que

Appendix C: Hotel Employee and Restaurant Employee (HERE) List of Locals

Local Number	City	Jurisdiction	Leadership
53	Duluth	Mixed	
54	Duluth	Bartenders	
152	Minneapolis	Bartenders	A.J. Kilday, Fabian Frawley
176	Virginia	Mixed	
183	Minneapolis	Laundry	Rubin Latz
231	International Falls	Bartenders	
287	St. Paul	Bartenders	
346	Minneapolis	Beer, Soft Drink and Soda Dispensers	
359	International Falls	Waitresses	
367	Cloquet	Mixed	
458	Minneapolis	Cooks and Waiters, White	Leslie Sinton, Ann Manley, Adolph Berger, Anton Twedt
463	Hibbing	Bartenders	
481	Winnoa		
516	St. Paul	Dining Car Waiters, Black	
556	St. Paul	Cooks and Waiters, White	Hans Johnson
603	St. Paul	Waiters, Black	Nobles Houser
614	Minneapolis	Waiters, Black	Anthony Cassius, Samuel Harris, Robert Mallory, Merton Ewing, James Robinson, Albert Raglin
636	Mankato		
640	Brainerd		
651	Fargo and Moorhead		
665	Minneapolis	Miscellaneous Hotel Workers	John Bortnick, George Naumoff, Raymond Wright, Albert Allen, Nellie Stone Johnson, Swan Assarson
725	Minneapolis	Mixed	
731	Rochester		
762	Red Wing	Mixed	
799	Minneapolis		
813	St. Cloud	Cooks, Waiters and Bartenders	

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