

THE RECOGNITION OF INHERENT DIGNITY: Women Change Makers in the Progressive Era

An original play based on *mostly* primary source documents
by Steven Angel & Priscilla Kane Hellweg

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**The Recognition of Inherent Dignity:
Women Change Makers in the Progressive Era**

by Steven Angel & Priscilla Kane Hellweg

NARRATOR 1:

1948 -- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Preamble

Whereas *recognition of the inherent dignity* and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, ...,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge, Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, ...¹

¹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>
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Eleanor Roosevelt

NARRATOR:

Eleanor Roosevelt, *The Struggle for Human Rights*,
September 28, 1948 Sorbonne, Paris, France

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT:

(More than two thousand people crowded into the university amphitheater on September 28 and many more were denied entry. Speaking in French to an audience that included Marshall and members of the French government)²

ADD FRENCH

(Speaking French...) I have come this evening to talk with you on one of the greatest issues of our time -- that is the preservation of human freedom. I have chosen to discuss it here in France, at the Sorbonne, because here in this soil the roots of human freedom have long ago struck deep and here they have been richly nourished. It was here the Declaration of the Rights of Man was proclaimed, and the great slogans of the French Revolution -- liberty, equality, fraternity -- fired the imagination of men. I have chosen to discuss this issue in Europe because this has been the scene of the greatest historic battles between freedom and tyranny.

"We the people of the United Nations [are] determined...to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and...to promote social progress..."

...One of the purposes of the United Nations is... "to achieve...cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion...."

"This is what we hope human rights may mean to all people in the years to come."
The Declaration has come from the Human Rights Commission with unanimous acceptance except for four abstentions -- the U.S.S.R., Yugoslavia, Ukraine, and Byelorussia.

² <http://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/maps/Europe1948final.html>

...We must not be confused about what freedom is. Basic human rights are simple and easily understood: freedom of speech and a free press; freedom of religion and worship; freedom of assembly and the right of petition; the right of men to be secure in their homes and free from unreasonable search and seizure...

...There are basic differences that show up even in the use of words between a democratic and a totalitarian country. For instance "democracy" means one thing to the U.S.S.R. and another to the U.S.A. and, I know, in France.

...The U.S.S.R. Representatives assert that they already have achieved many things which we, in what they call the "bourgeois democracies" cannot achieve because their government controls the accomplishment of these things. Our government seems powerless to them because, in the last analysis, it is controlled by the people.

...I have great sympathy with the Russian people. They love their country and have always defended it valiantly against invaders. They have been through a period of revolution, as a result of which they were for a time cut off from outside contact. They have not lost their resulting suspicion of other countries and the great difficulty is today that their government encourages this suspicion and seems to believe that force alone will bring them respect.

... Freedom for our peoples is not only a right, but also a tool. Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of information, freedom of assembly--these are not just abstract ideals to us; they are tools with which we create a way of life...

I have heard my husband say many times that a people need never lose their freedom if they kept their right to a secret ballot and if they used that secret ballot to the full. Basic decisions of our society are made through the expressed will of the people. That is why when we see these liberties threatened, instead of falling apart, our nation becomes unified and our democracies come together as a unified group in spite of our varied backgrounds and many racial strains.

In the United States we are old enough not to claim perfection. We recognize that we have some problems of discrimination but we find steady progress being made in the solution of these problems. Through normal democratic processes we are coming to understand our needs and how we can attain full equality for all our people.

It is my belief, and I am sure it is also yours, that the struggle for democracy and freedom is a critical struggle....

...If we examine Hitler's rise to power, we see how the chains are forged which keep the individual a slave ... there must be at least a two-party system in a country because when there is only one political party, ...it becomes a tyrant and not an instrument of democratic government.

...The Charter of the United Nations is a guiding beacon along the way to the achievement of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world...

...As one of the Delegates from the United States, I pray Almighty God that we may win another victory here for the rights and freedoms of all men.³

³Eleanor Roosevelt, *The Struggle for Human Rights*, delivered 28 September 1948, Paris, France
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/eleanorroosevelt.htm>

NARRATOR 1:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Articles 19, 20, and 23.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; ...

Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association....

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

- Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity....
- Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests⁴

⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>
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ANNA SULLIVAN⁵

NARRATOR 1:

Heralded as “Labor’s First Lady in Western Massachusetts,” those who knew Anna Burns Sullivan ...used similar terms to describe her: she was a “dynamo,” “always the little spark plug in the crowd,” and “a real fighter for her people.” Although well-known throughout her lifetime as “the little fireball from Western Massachusetts,” her memory has been all but forgotten. No buildings, streets, parks, or rooms at the local community college are named after her.

Anna Sullivan: Family and Formative Years: Holyoke 1903 to 1918

ANNA:

(Stuffing Envelopes with 2 people from the audience and the narrator) My father and mother were strong labor supporters. “They always talked about elections...[We were] always hearing it, there were always discussions we had, both my mother and father. Our dinner table was always a political rally.”

My mother was a strong supporter of women’s suffrage who regularly worked the polls on election days and canvassed before hand to turn out Democratic voters. ...My father and my Uncle John belonged to a workers union variously referred to as the “Dynamiters Club” and the “Holyoke Labor College,” the men brought in speakers from local colleges and engaged in heated political debates. ...Father “was always coming home with his tools, [fired] you know. Those were the days when you talked union, you only had to talk it and you were let out. There was no protection.”

NARRATOR 1:

Mill Work: Cotton and Silk, Holyoke, 1918 to 1934

ANNA:

I went in the Mills, despite the fact that Mother was strongly opposed to millwork, “it was the only thing you could get into.” I was 15.

My first job was in the card room at American Thread and involved removing the large wooden bobbins spun full of yarn from the machine and replacing them with empty ones.

⁵ ANNA B. SULLIVAN, 1903-1983: THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF A TEXTILE MILL UNION ORGANIZER (HOLYOKE, MASSACHUSETTS), L. Mara Dodge, Historical Journal of Massachusetts, Summer 2008, Vol. 36
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“I don’t think many kids went for this work. You came out looking like Santa Claus. Your hair was covered with cotton, your clothes with cotton, you ate cotton. It was, you know, all cotton...They didn’t have such things as vents [ventilation] in those days. Believe me, you just swallowed the cotton...It was, always was, a bad job.”

“The noise alone in a textile mill is tremendous. Walk through the weave room and you can’t hear yourself think.”

“The machines were huge. When [our] bobbins filled up, we had to doff [remove] them and put them in a truck. And the truck was as big as me.”

“One day [my boss] came by and said, ‘I can’t let you work on this job anymore. I’m afraid you’re going to end up in the bottom of the truck.’ ‘Well, I said, but I have to work. I’ve got to have a job.’”

A boss could make your life easy or make it living hell. “Bosses were kings. Before the union [they] had absolute power to hire, fire, promote, or lay off. If he liked the color of your hair today you were alright. If he didn’t like it tomorrow, good bye.”

He sent me to the packing room where I would not “have trucks to fall into.” The packing room was quiet and clean; no cotton lint filled the air. I packed darning cotton for darning socks, and was now able to make about \$12 a week compared to \$2.50. “...It was a big difference for me. And it was a big difference for my mother.”

[Then] In 1923 American Thread closed down its carding department and laid off workers throughout the mill. That year I went to...William Skinner & Sons. At...Skinner...I asked specifically for a weaving job.... The silk mill by far had better working conditions [than cotton or wool mills]... but the weavers were paid only after [we] had produced set amount of cloth, and [we] were fined for any defects, whereas other workers received a regular weekly paycheck. [And then there was the speed up and stretch out of our workload.] “I worked like heck. You couldn’t lay down on that job.”

“The twenties were bad. Jobs were hard to get. And you hung on and hung on.” The Skinners had to cut their workforce from three thousand to one thousand... and to five hundred during the depression.

...“By [1928] we were on very short time. We worked one week and then you were one week out [laid off]...We got lots of vacations but no pay. In ’29 and ’30, we often worked

just ten days a month.” In the fall of 1930 William Skinner and Sons shut down for three full months due to a lack of orders.

NARRATOR 1:

The Great Upsurge: Textile Union Organizing in the 1930's

ANNA:

The Skinner Silk Mill was a “closely-knit family affair. Once they heard any talking, I mean it would be, that was the end of that worker, you know. If you talked [union], you were on the list with your head chopped off.” But still we organized a Weaver’s Union at Skinners in ‘32. “It couldn’t have gotten any worse for us. We were already at rock bottom.”

That’s when I had my first major confrontation with mill superintendent William Hubbard, who was Skinner’s nephew. Hubbard thought he [had] good news the day he came to make the announcement “Well, we’re all set. We’re shutting down for ten days.” assuming we’d be delighted to hear of the holiday shutdown.

“Christmas, ten days off, no pay, you always felt so bad. Men with families and women like me got hit. Imagine trying to plan for two weeks out...your rent and your food, when you don’t have enough money for one week, you never get back on your feet, always in debt, always behind. And I said, “This place? This is the worst thing in the winter time you can do to the people...In the summer time, we manage. In winter they can’t manage. They’ll never get [back] on their feet...You know I don’t think any one of them could buy a ten cent toy for their kids at Christmas. You talk about Christmas,” I said. “There’s no charity in you people. All you think of...” and, you know, all of a sudden I said an awful lot of things I maybe shouldn’t have said, but I did say...I got it off my chest that day in no uncertain terms.

Hubbard left abruptly, but returned that afternoon, admitting, “I never realized this. I never realized what was happening.” That day he canceled the plant closing. “We never had ten days shut down again.”

“Everybody felt [Hubbard] was a bear and they couldn’t you know, talk to him in any which way. But he’d come in to me and say, “How are things going?” because I was the head of the union for the shop. And so this day he came in very chipper and he just happened to say the wrong thing. Or the right thing...Yeah [laughing], I think he said the right thing.”

“...I don’t suppose he ever did consider it, maybe never had to, you know. He didn’t know what it was to be without anything.

NARRATOR:

Unlike many textile mills, which were owned by absentee owners, trusts, or conglomerates, the Skinner family lived in Holyoke and was known for their community service and philanthropic contributions.

ANNA:

[I remember in ‘30], at the same time that [the] workers were experiencing wrenching wage cuts and work shortages, Joseph Skinner gave a \$50,000 donation to ...Mt. Holyoke College.... [Joseph had a hall] named in their honor. [Other] Skinner family members would give ...large gifts throughout the Great Depression. [As far as I saw it] the funds for Skinner’s philanthropic donations came directly out of worker’s paychecks. “Whenever we heard the Skinners were about to make another donation, we knew our wages would be cut.”

NARRATOR 1:

1934 National Textile Strike

ANNA:

“When we walked out on strike in ‘34 ...conditions were so bad....We couldn’t have gone any lower. I think this was the feeling that we had, and we thought we were going to be able to win something. But we got left high and dry. The AFL (American Federation of Labor) just ended the strike...[they] really cared just for the trades [skilled craft workers], this was really their feeling...They didn’t think much of the textile worker or unskilled worker....My feeling...was that we’d never be able to organize Skinners after what had happened. Because we went back with wage cuts after the strike.”

NARRATOR 1:

But, much to her delight, Skinner workers would respond with equal enthusiasm during the next textile drive in 1937. Indeed, they were the first mill in Western Massachusetts to win a union contract under the auspices of the CIO, the newly-formed and militant rival to the moribund AFL.

In 1938 Sullivan was officially hired as a full-time CIO organizer. Two years later she was hired by the newly-formed Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA), one of only six women out of 94 national organizers.

ANNA

“They weren’t too anxious to put a woman manager in. “They thought I would fall on my face, but I worked twice as hard and showed we could do it...”

NARRATOR 1:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Articles 18, 19, and 21

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression;

Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government...⁶

⁶ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>
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ELIZABETH TOWNE

NARRATOR 1:

(Beat Reporter, reading from steno pad) Born in 1865, Elizabeth Towne was the daughter of one of Oregon's earliest pioneers. In 1900, at age 35, she reversed her father's footsteps and headed east to Holyoke where she became a pioneer in her own right.⁷ Towne became a leader in the "New Thought" movement, a precursor to today's New Age Movement.

TOWNE:

(Drinking tea) [I] dropped out of school at fourteen to marry ... but the marriage proved to be an unhappy one. [I had to support [myself] and [my] children. ...it suddenly came to [me] that [I] should undertake to publish a small periodical. [I] had no capital with which to begin it, but secured some help from [my] father, \$30 per month for a six-month period... At thirty-five years old and the mother of two teenage children, [I] left [my] husband and began publishing a magazine...called *Nautilus* and featuring articles about spiritual healing, [my] fledgling journal attracted among its subscribers a man from Holyoke, Massachusetts by the name of William E. Towne. Towne, a stenographer at a paper manufacturer, began corresponding with [me]. Before long, [I] ...headed east....and [we] married..., and together [we] built up a substantial and even profitable business in the publishing and distribution of the magazine... The first issue of *Nautilus* made in Holyoke, June 1900, was 4,500 copies, and the printer's bill was just \$36.93, including the wrapping. Within a short space of time this little four-page paper had grown to be a handsome illustrated magazine. Almost 50,000 of *Nautilus* were mailed out of Holyoke each month... It was far and away the largest customer of the Holyoke post office. It took four girls a whole week to wrap up a single issue of *Nautilus*.⁸

NARRATOR 1:

The magazine was a family business. Elizabeth Towne acted as publisher and editor, William was treasurer and a regular columnist, and Elizabeth's son from her first marriage, Chester Struble, was the managing editor.⁹

...Although New Thought had an impressive band of followers nationwide, in Holyoke, the Townes were said to be the only followers.¹⁰

⁷ www.elizabethtowne.wwwhubs.com

⁸ www.elizabethtowne.wwwhubs.com

⁹ *Women in the Valley - Pioneering Woman in Publishing and Politics* By Tzivia Gover
Historical Journal of Massachusetts, Vol. 37, Spring 2009

¹⁰ *Women in the Valley - Pioneering Woman in Publishing and Politics* By Tzivia Gover
Historical Journal of Massachusetts, Vol. 37, Spring 2009

NARRATOR 1:

1927. Transcript columnist William Flagg: “Mrs. Elizabeth Towne is not only the pioneer woman alderman but she is quite likely to be the pioneer woman mayor.”

TOWNE:

(Reading from articles she has written for the Nautilus & Holyoke Transcript & Telegram)

“Dearies,¹¹

“Congratulations are in order! On December 7th, I was elected Alderman at-Large in the city of Holyoke, the pioneer woman candidate for public office in this city ... The women say that they are the ones who put me in! And the men are saying that it was they who did it! But just between you and me, I rather think that they both had a finger in the pie.”¹²

I won with 7,334 votes, a substantial majority over the six male contenders and I am now one of this state's first women to sit on a board of aldermen.

One columnist claims I must have “hypnotized” the city’s women voters and warns that “The Board of Alderman of 1927 is in for a good many midnight sessions with Alderman Towne still talking,” alluding, I suppose, to my penchant for verbosity.

The papers are already predicting that I will run for mayor.

NARRATOR 1:

“... Towne ran for mayor “knowing that every possibility was against her, but wanting to prove that a woman could run for the office.”

October 1928, Holyoke Daily Transcript and Telegram

TOWNE:

“The wish is father to the thought. I wonder whose thought it is that “fathers” those recurrent rumors to the effect that Elizabeth Towne will withdraw her candidacy for mayor. It would be interesting to know ... I shall be candidate for mayor in the coming election . . . I was traveling in the West and visiting in Portland, Ore., all the month of August, and I have been pretty much “in the silence” for the month of September. I am

¹¹ Towne uses the term “dearie” to address her readers in *Self Healing* by Elizabeth Towne, Published by The Elizabeth Towne Co., Inc., Holyoke, MA, 1923

¹² *Women in the Valley - Pioneering Woman in Publishing and Politics* By Tzivia Gover
Historical Journal of Massachusetts, Vol. 37, Spring 2009

just emerging from “the silence” . . . Beginning about November, I shall get busy on the best campaign for mayor that I know how to make . . . I am going to give the city of Holyoke a chance to try out Elizabeth Towne’s brand of public service and enterprise for the upbuilding of the city of Holyoke.

NARRATOR 1:

For the first time, a woman [was] running for mayor of Holyoke. To liven things up further, she [ran] against [the] sitting mayor, Fred G. Burnham, and one of the most popular former mayors in the city’s history, John F. Cronin.

1928 Letters to the Holyoke Transcript and Telegram. On the Campaign Trail.

TOWNE:

“I understand that ‘the opposition’ in Holyoke, the machine politicians, resort very frequently to the little trick of publicizing the wrong date when they happen to be opposed to the candidate who is to speak.”

NARRATOR 1:

A Campaign Poster

TOWNE:

“I am tied to no political machine; to no group; to no individual. I am free to make all appointments IN THE INTEREST OF THE PEOPLE OF HOLYOKE.”

NARRATOR 1:

1928 Letters to the Holyoke Transcript and Telegram.

“The vagaries, hallucinations and arguments of the ‘New Thought’ mind temporarily diverted from their proper channels into problems political, are alike unexplainable and like the ways of Divine Providence, passeth all understanding.” - Fred G. Burnham, Incumbent Mayor

TOWNE:

“Though I may look up, as well as down; though I may look forward with enthusiasm, my two feet are planted firmly upon the earth and I am very much on the job.”

NARRATOR 1:

November 1928, Holyoke Transcript and Telegram - The Final Rally

With just three days before Holyoke's municipal election...once again Elizabeth Towne took the podium to advance her campaign, this time in Holyoke High School's auditorium...On this November day, a crowd of more than one hundred ventured out in cold, wet weather to hear what Towne had to say.

During this, her final campaign speech of the election season, two city aldermen took it upon themselves to disrupt the proceedings and fire questions at the candidate. "Aldermen Patrick F. Monahan and Milton S. Spies were the questioners but Mrs. Towne refused to answer them."

Towne has been accused of seeking office as a publicity stunt, to which she replies,

TOWNE:

"as a woman already internationally known I have no need to seek additional publicity."

NARRATOR 1:

And of wanting to gain office in order to attain powerful positions for her...son and husband, to which she responds,

TOWNE:

"...such a motive would be counter to [my] best interests, as [my] son and husband help [me] run [my] publishing business, and [I] couldn't afford to set them up in any other position."

NARRATOR 1:

The heckling kept up until a voice from the audience called out to the man who was speaking, "Sit down, you fathead." At this, Towne's detractors retreated and the rally continued as planned.

On Election Day, Holyoke voters turned out in record numbers. Of the nearly 20,000 who came to the polls, more than half (11,816) voted for Burnham. A healthy 7,490 voted for former Mayor John F. Cronin. Only 478 cast a vote for Towne.

TOWNE:

"I congratulate Mr. Burnham on being elected by the majority of votes and I wish him every success. Naturally I am sorry I did not win yesterday's election, but I was not greatly surprised. 'They said' no mayor could be elected without 'the machine' but I had hoped it could be done. Two Holyoke men politicians have tried it, one received 67 votes, if I remember it, and the other a hundred and something. The woman did not do so badly by comparison. I shall not try again."

NARRATOR 1:

Universal Declaration

Articles 25, 26, and 27

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.¹³

Mill Worker and the Skinner Coffee House

NARRATOR 1:

¹³ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>
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In 1902 [William] Skinner's sons and daughters opened the Skinner Coffee Shop as a memorial to their father ...

Located on Main Street within walking distance of the silk mill, the Coffee Shop was intended to provide a place where working women could go to socialize, learn practical skills, and get an inexpensive, hot lunch.¹⁴

For the first two years the work was managed by the founders, but during the [following twelve], at their request, the [Young Women's Christian Association] assumed direction. From its beginning, Mrs. L. S. Whitcomb [was] in charge, and under her management and that of the committee from the association, the work ... advanced steadily, though quietly, along the lines marked out for it.¹⁵

Large numbers ... used the rooms for class work, for the Noon Lunch, and for social purposes.... Mothers' meetings were started in the fall [of 1908, with] ... such subjects ... as Feeding of Infants, Cigarette Habit Among Boys, and Contagious Diseases of Children.¹⁶

(Emilie Plourde - Smith College Senior - carrying big black binder with thesis draft to read from)

Hi. Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me... My name is Emilie. I am a senior at Smith College. This interview is part of my Senior Thesis. I'm researching the experiences of millworkers in Holyoke.

If it's okay with you, I'll turn on the tape recorder and we can get started.

(Turns on tape recorder)

Can you tell me anything you remember about the Skinner Coffee House? What it was like?

MILL WORKER:¹⁷

The Coffee House? Oh sure. There was a lot of things going on there. They used to have clubs like. That was nice.

NARRATOR 1:

¹⁴ From Paternalism to Professional Management: The Skinner Silk Mills, Holyoke, MA, 1880-1938, Emelie M. Plourde, History Room, Holyoke Public Library, Pg 54-57

¹⁵ YWCA, Holyoke MA, Annual Report, 6/1/1907, History Room, Holyoke Public Library

¹⁶ From Paternalism to Professional Management: The Skinner Silk Mills, Holyoke, MA, 1880-1938, Emelie M. Plourde, History Room, Holyoke Public Library, Pg 54-57

¹⁷ All Millworker text based on Plourde transcripts, YWCA Annual Reports 1907-1917, Holyoke Transcript & Telegram articles, Skinner Coffee House Annual Reports

Can you tell me about them?

MILL WORKER:

My ma belonged to the Mothers' Club. She'd take me with her when I was little. All the kiddies were looked after in another room while the women went to the meeting. She said they had speakers who gave practical talks on the care of children. Doctors and such, you know.

After that it was the Noon Lunch with soup and sandwiches, drinks...they had the best pies.

And there was domestic arts in the evenings for the girls coming out of the mills. They taught dressmaking, embroidery, millinery. There was a cooking class.

(unfolds paper)

I brought this along to read, I thought you might like it.

Ma always said the lady in charge of the Mothers' Club liked to quote it:

“A house is built of bricks and stones, of sills and posts and piers,
But a home is built of loving deeds, that stand a thousand years.
A house, though but a humble cot, within its walls may hold,
A home of priceless beauty rich in love's eternal gold.
The men of earth build houses, halls and chambers, roofs and domes,
But the women of the earth, God knows, the women build the homes.”

Ma just loved that, “...the women build the homes!”

NARRATOR 1:

I like it too. Thank you for bringing with you today.

Um...may I ask you...Did you belong to any clubs?

MILL WORKER:

Oh, ah, when I was seven years old I went there to learn how to sew.

A nice girl from Mount Holyoke College named Miss Wallace ran those classes for us kiddies. She was always after us about clean hands and keeping our thimbles ON OUR FINGERS.

We had models to work from to teach us all the practical stitches. First we made a workbag, then a needle book and then an apron. (I still have my needle book.)

The older girls made kimonos.

NARRATOR 1:

(Reading from Senior Thesis)

The Coffee Shop proved so successful that in 1916 it was moved to new quarters in the renovated Palatine Hotel at the corner of Hamilton and Main Streets in the heart of the tenement section. ... The families living there were American-born French-Canadian, Polish and Greek...

The new Coffee Shop, consisting of four floors with a roof garden and ground patio, contained not only a self-serve cafeteria which could provide meals to 150 women three times a day, and rooms for lounging, but a theater with balcony, classrooms where 35 to 40 different classes were held, a public bath and fifteen rooms for girls “who, homeless, stranded by some extremity, will find a home” at no cost for up to two weeks.¹⁸

MILL WORKER:

I remember when they opened the new Coffee House. There was such a celebration. Miss Skinner and Mrs. Kilbourne was there and they welcomed everyone who came in the door that day.

NARRATOR 1:

Did you take any classes at the New Coffee House?

MILL WORKER:

Oh yeah, I used to go there all the time in my teens, learning to make clothes and cook, after school. That was before I went into Skinner’s. Into the Silk Mill.

I took piano lessons there. And I learned how to dance.

They had the most wonderful parties. We would submit lists of boys who were our particular friends and they would get a special invitation to come...Founder’s Night, Halloween, Christmas.

There was always presents and prizes, sleigh rides and picnics.

NARRATOR 1:

That sounds really nice.

MILL WORKER:

Oh, yes. The Skinners were very good.

And then after, when I was married, I took classes there, same as Ma.

Different though, you know.

¹⁸ From Paternalism to Professional Management: The Skinner Silk Mills, Holyoke, MA, 1880-1938, Emelie M. Plourde, History Room, Holyoke Public Library, Pg 54-57

“Pre-natal for women soon to become mothers.”

I think there was twelve of us in that class. Miss Rose Butler from the Visiting Nurse Association.... She was our teacher. And after the class was over, we'd always have a salad or tea and cakes, or something, depending on what she had.

Nice, but important, too.

They taught us how to raise a family, keep a house, Red Cross First Aid.

Everything.

NARRATOR 1:

Keeping house?

MILL WORKER:

Well I always took sewing and cooking there, since I was a kiddie, but after I was married, they had a home making department and taught us girls everything about caring for a home.

NARRATOR 1:

Oh, I see. (Looks at list of questions) Can you tell me anything about the special rooms they had upstairs?

MILL WORKER:

I remember they was never empty. There was always some hard case coming along. A girl who run away from home or was unmarried and in trouble or even someone traveling who didn't know where to spend the night.

They took in everyone.

One time it was a little girl who was sick, and her own home too cold, so the doctors asked, could she come and stay at the Coffee house. Doris, I think her name was.

And a mother and her two little kiddies. Her husband was a drunk and they were trying to find a new home. They came and went all through one summer.

NARRATOR 1:

Wow. Well, thank you for talking to me. Uh...was there...is there...anything else you'd like to tell me about?

MILL WORKER:

It's kinda funny to think of now, but.... we'd go take a bath there, my ma, my sisters and me, because at the time, in our apartment, we didn't have no bathtub.

We'd go; we'd bring our soap, our towels and our clean clothes. Every week for a long time.

We weren't the only ones. All the girls around did it too. It was nice.

I think it was maybe ten cents. [laughter] It wasn't much.

But, honestly, I don't think anyone can really understand what having that bath available meant to the women and girls in our neighborhood.

NARRATOR 1:

May I read you some entries from the Skinner Coffee House Guest Book? I don't know if you've ever seen these...

"Every moments I spent in the Skinner coffee House for the past 15 years 'as been a source of pleasure. I thank you." – Mrs. Ida Parlengas

"Just a few lines to let you know what the Skinner Coffee House means to me. Coming to it since a child eight years of age. Now I am 32 years of age meaning ...24 years of pleasure, joy, knowledge, and friendship. I am now the Most Happiest Mother of seven lovely children. But still I have love, love left for the Skinner coffee House. I have branched out to have two daughters coming to the Skinner Coffee House. My second home is the Skinner Coffee House. It shares not only happiness but brings joy when sorrow." - Mrs. Charles O'Leary

"... My oldest girl was just a baby and I a young mother and [I] found valuable assistance and advice in upbringing of my family.... Thank you." - Mrs. I. Gochring¹⁹

MILL WORKER:

Yeah, it was a godsend.

¹⁹ Skinner Coffee House Guest Book, circa 1920's, Wistariahurst Collection box 183
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NARRATOR 1:

Declaration

Articles 6, 17, 18, and 22

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security ...²⁰

²⁰ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>
ENCHANTED CIRCLE THEATER www.enchantedcircletheater.com

JANE ADDAMS

NARRATOR 1:

Known as the “mother” of social work, Jane Addams was a pioneer American reformer, social worker, and women’s rights activist.

In 1931 she became the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her role as a leading peace activist during World War I.²¹

In 1887, [she] traveled to Europe with Ellen Gates Starr, a college classmate. On this trip, which included a visit to Toynbee Hall, a settlement house in London’s East End, Addams and Starr formulated ideas about establishing a settlement house in the [United States] that would directly address the human consequences of rapid industrialization, immigration, and urban poverty.

As a co-founder of Chicago’s Hull House, Addams became heavily involved [in the] civic affairs of the city and [became] a leader in the social reform movement.²²

(Reading from the book): Twenty Years at Hull-House with Autobiographical Notes, by Jane Addams (1860-1935)

JANE ADDAMS:

(Sitting at a table, typing her autobiography)

Hull House, Chicago, 1910

On the 18th of September, 1889, Miss Starr and I moved into [Hull House], with Miss Mary Keyser, who began performing the housework...

...Hull-House once stood in the suburbs, but the city has steadily grown up around it and its site now has corners on three or four foreign colonies. Between Halsted Street and the river live about ten thousand Italians....

To the south on Twelfth Street are many Germans, and side streets are given over almost entirely to Polish and Russian Jews.

...The streets are inexpressibly dirty, the number of schools inadequate, sanitary legislation unenforced, the street lighting bad, the paving miserable and altogether lacking in the alleys and smaller streets, and the stables foul beyond description. Hundreds of houses are unconnected with the street sewer. The older and richer inhabitants seem anxious to move away as rapidly as they can afford it. They make room for newly arrived immigrants who are densely ignorant of civic duties.

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Addams

²² <http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/sophiasmith/mnsss141.html>

NARRATOR 1: This substitution of the older inhabitants is accomplished industrially also, in the south and east quarters of the ward. The Jews and Italians do the finishing for the great clothing manufacturers, formerly done by Americans, Irish, and Germans, who refused to submit to the extremely low prices to which the sweating system has reduced their successors....

JANE: The houses of the ward, for the most part wooden, were originally built for one family and are now occupied by several. Rear tenements flourish; many houses have no water supply save the faucet in the back yard, there are no fire escapes, the garbage and ashes are placed in wooden boxes which are fastened to the street pavements.

NARRATOR 1: In every neighborhood where poorer people live, because rents are supposed to be cheaper there, is an element which, although uncertain in the individual, in the aggregate can be counted upon.

JANE: Men and women of education and refinement come to live in a cheaper neighborhood because they lack the ability to make money, because of ill health, because of an unfortunate marriage, or for other reasons which do not imply criminality or stupidity. Among them are those who, in spite of untoward circumstances, keep up some sort of an intellectual life; those who are "great for books," as their neighbors say. To such the Settlement may be a genuine refuge.

NARRATOR 1: ...In those early days we were often asked why we had come to live on Halsted Street when we could afford to live somewhere else.

JANE: In time it came to seem natural to all of us that the Settlement should be there. If it is natural to feed the hungry and care for the sick, it is certainly natural to give pleasure to the young, comfort to the aged, and to minister to the deep-seated craving for social intercourse that all men feel.

NARRATOR 1: ...We were asked to wash the new-born babies, and to prepare the dead for burial, to nurse the sick, and to "mind the children."

JANE: Occasionally these neighborly offices unexpectedly uncovered ugly human traits. ...a little Italian bride of fifteen sought shelter with us one November evening to escape her husband who had beaten her every night for a week when he returned home from work, because she had lost her wedding ring;

NARRATOR 1: Two of us officiated quite alone at the birth of an illegitimate child because the doctor was late in arriving, and none of the honest Irish matrons would "touch the likes of her";

JANE: We ministered at the deathbed of a young man, who during a long illness of tuberculosis had received so many bottles of whisky through the mistaken kindness of his friends, that the cumulative effect produced wild periods of exultation, in one of which he died.

BOTH: ...But in spite of some untoward experiences, we were constantly impressed with the uniform kindness and courtesy we received.

JANE: Perhaps these first days laid the simple human foundations which are certainly essential for continuous living among the poor; first,

NARRATOR 1: Genuine preference for residence in an industrial quarter to any other part of the city,

JANE: because it is interesting and makes the human appeal;

NARRATOR 1: and second, the conviction,

JANE: ...that the things that make men alike are finer and better than the things that keep them apart, and that these basic likenesses, if they are properly accentuated, easily transcend the less essential differences of race, language, creed, and tradition.²³

²³ *Twenty Years at Hull-House with Autobiographical Notes.* by Jane Addams (1860-1935). New York: The MacMillan Company, 1912 (c.1910)

NARRATOR 2:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Articles 1, 4, and 7

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.²⁴

²⁴Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>
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IDA B. WELLS

NARRATOR:

Ida B. Wells-Barnett was described over and over again as militant, courageous, determined, impassioned, and aggressive.²⁵

A daughter of slaves, [she] was born in Holly Springs, Mississippi, on July 16, 1862. A journalist, Wells led an anti-lynching crusade in the United States in the 1890s, and went on to found and become integral in groups striving for African-American justice, [including the NAACP].²⁶

"...she was perhaps the first person to recite the horrors of lynching in lurid detail. By the written and spoken word she laid bare the barbarism and inhumanity of the rope..."²⁷

IDA B. WELLS:

"...Three years ago last June, I became editor and part owner of the Memphis Free Speech. As editor, I had occasion to criticize the city School Board's employment of inefficient teachers and poor school-buildings for Afro-American children. I was in the employ of that board at the time, and at the close of that school-term one year ago, was not re-elected to a position I had held in the city schools for seven years.

Accepting the decision of the Board of Education, I set out to make a race newspaper pay—a thing which older and wiser heads said could not be done. But there were enough of our people in Memphis and surrounding territory to support a paper, and I believed they would do so. With nine months hard work the circulation increased from 1,500 to 3,500; in twelve months it was on a good paying basis.

Throughout the Mississippi Valley in Arkansas, Tennessee and Mississippi on plantations and in towns, the demand for and interest in the paper increased among the masses. The newsboys who would not sell it on the trains, voluntarily testified that they had never known colored people to demand a paper so eagerly.

To make the paper a paying business I became advertising agent, solicitor, as well as editor, and was continually on the go. Wherever I went among the people, I gave them

²⁵ Introduction, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, Ida B. Wells, University of Chicago Press, 1972

²⁶ https://www.biography.com/people/ida-b-wells-9527635?_escaped_fragment=

²⁷ Editors Forward, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, Ida B. Wells, University of Chicago Press, 1972

in church, school, public gatherings, and home, the benefit of my honest conviction that maintenance of character, money getting and education would finally solve our problem and that it depended on us to say how soon this would be brought about.

This sentiment bore good fruit in Memphis. We had nice homes, representatives in almost every branch of business and profession, and refined society. We had learned that helping each other helped all, and every well-conducted business by Afro-Americans prospered. With all our proscription in theatres, hotels and on railroads, we had never had a lynching and did not believe we could have one. There had been lynchings and brutal outrages of all sorts in our own state and those adjoining us, but we had confidence and pride in our city and the majesty of its laws. So far in advance of other Southern cities was ours, we were content to endure the evils we had, to labor and to wait.

But there was a rude awakening.

On the morning of March 9, the bodies of three of our best young men were found in an old field horribly shot to pieces. These young men had owned and operated the "People's Grocery," situated at what was known as the Curve—a suburb made up almost entirely of colored people—about a mile from city limits.

The young men were well known and popular and their business flourished, and that of Barrett, a white grocer who kept store there before the "People's Grocery" was established, went down.

I have no power to describe the feeling of horror that possessed every member of the race in Memphis when the truth dawned upon us that the protection of the law which we had so long enjoyed was no longer ours; all this had been destroyed in a night, and the barriers of the law had been thrown down, and the guardians of the public peace and confidence scoffed away into the shadows, and all authority given into the hands of the mob, and innocent men cut down as if they were brutes—the first feeling was one of utter dismay, then intense indignation.

There was only one thing we could do, and a great determination seized upon the people to "turn our faces to the West," whose laws protect all alike. The Free Speech, supported by our ministers and leading business men, advised the people to leave a community whose laws did not protect them. Hundreds left on foot to walk four hundred miles between Memphis and Oklahoma...

In two months, six thousand persons had left the city and every branch of business began to feel this silent resentment of the outrage, and failure of the authorities to punish the lynchers. There were a number of business failures and blocks of houses were for rent. The superintendent and treasurer of the street railway company...urge[d] the colored people to ride again on the street cars.

To restore the equilibrium and put a stop to the great financial loss, the next move was to get rid of the [Memphis] Free Speech...In casting about for an excuse, the mob found it in the following editorial...

May 21, 1892

“Eight negroes lynched in one week. Since last issue of the Free Speech one was lynched at Little Rock, Ark., where the citizens broke into the penitentiary and got their man; three near Anniston, Ala., and one in New Orleans, all on the same charge, the new alarm of assaulting white women-and three near Clarksville, Ga., for killing a white man. The same program of hanging-then shooting bullets into the lifeless bodies was carried out to the letter. Nobody in this section of the country believes the old threadbare lie that negro men rape white women. If Southern white men are not careful they will overreach themselves, and public sentiment will have a reaction. A conclusion will then be reached which will be very damaging to the moral reputation of their women.”

[On] Thursday, May 25, at 3 p.m., I landed in New York City for a few days' stay before returning home, and there learned from the papers that my business manager had been driven away and the paper suspended...I received telegrams and letters...informing me that the trains were being watched, that I was to be dumped into the river and beaten, if not killed; it had been learned that I wrote the editorial and I was to be hanged in front of the court-house and my face bled if I returned, and I was implored by my friends to remain away.

The creditors attached the office in the meantime and the outfit was sold without more ado, thus destroying effectually that which it had taken years to build. One prominent insurance agent publicly declares he will make it his business to shoot me down on sight if I return to Memphis in twenty years, while a leading white lady had remarked that she was opposed to the lynching of those three men in March, but she did wish there was some way by which I could be gotten back and lynched.”²⁸

²⁸*Lynch Law in all its Phases*, February 13, 1893 delivered by Ida B. Wells at Tremont Temple, Boston, Massachusetts

<http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/wells-lynch-law-speech-text/>

WELLS:

...“I am only a mouthpiece through which to tell the story of lynching and I have told it so often that I know it by heart. I do not have to embellish; it makes its own way.”²⁹

NARRATOR:

On May 8, 1909, Ida B. Wells spoke at the First Annual Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in Atlanta, Georgia.³⁰

WELLS:

“The lynching record for a quarter of a century merits the thoughtful study of the American people. It presents three salient facts: First, lynching is color-line murder. Second, crimes against women is the excuse, not the cause. Third, it is a national crime and requires a national remedy.

From 1882, in which year fifty-two were lynched, down to the present, lynching has been along the color line. Mob murder increased yearly until in 1892 more than two hundred victims were lynched and statistics show that 3,284 men, women and children have been put to death in this quarter of a century. No other nation, civilized or savage, burns its criminals; only under that Stars and Stripes is the human holocaust possible.

Why is mob murder permitted by a Christian nation? What is the cause of this awful slaughter? This question is answered almost daily— always the same shameless falsehood that “Negroes are lynched to protect womanhood.” This is the never-varying answer of lynchers and their apologists. All know that it is untrue....

As a final and complete refutation of the charge that lynching is occasioned by crimes against women, a partial record of lynchings is cited; 285 persons were lynched for causes as follows: Unknown cause, 92; no cause, 10; race prejudice, 49; miscegenation, 7; informing, 12; making threats, 11; keeping saloon, 3; practicing fraud, 5; practicing voodooism, 1; refusing evidence, 2; political causes, 5; disputing, 1; disobeying quarantine regulations, 2; slapping a child, 1; turning state’s evidence, 3; protecting a Negro, 1; to prevent giving evidence, 1; knowledge of larceny, 1; writing letter to white woman, 1; asking white woman to marry, 1; jilting girl, 1; having smallpox, 1; concealing criminal, 2; threatening political exposure, 1; self- defense, 6; cruelty; 1;

²⁹ Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells, Ida B. Wells, University of Chicago Press, 1972

³⁰ “This Awful Slaughter” Speech by Ida B. Wells, *NAACP first annual conference, Atlanta, Georgia, May 8, 1909*
<http://www.blackpast.org/1909-ida-b-wells-awful-slaughter>

insulting language to woman, 5; quarreling with white man, 2; colonizing Negroes, 1; throwing stones, 1; quarreling, 1; gambling, 1.³¹

In 1892, when lynching reached high-water mark, there were 241 persons lynched...³²

...The only certain remedy is an appeal to law. Lawbreakers must be made to know that human life is sacred and that every citizen of this country is first a citizen of the United States and secondly a citizen of the state in which he belongs.

... it would be a beginning in the right direction if this conference can see its way clear to establish a bureau for the investigation and publication of the details of every lynching...; that it will make an effort to secure expressions of opinion all over the country against lynching for the sake of the country's fair name; and lastly, but by no means least, to try to influence the daily papers of the country to refuse to become accessory to mobs either before or after the fact.

Time was when lynching appeared to be [regional], but now it is national—a blight upon our nation, mocking our laws and disgracing our Christianity. “With malice toward none but with charity for all” let us undertake the work of making the “law of the land” effective and supreme upon every foot of American soil—a shield to the innocent; and to the guilty, punishment swift and sure.³³

NARRATOR 1 and 2:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

³¹ “This Awful Slaughter” Speech by Ida B. Wells, *NAACP first annual conference, Atlanta, Georgia, May 8, 1909*
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³² *Lynch Law in all its Phases*, February 13, 1893 delivered by Ida B. Wells at Tremont Temple, Boston, Massachusetts
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³³ “This Awful Slaughter” Speech by Ida B. Wells, *NAACP first annual conference, Atlanta, Georgia, May 8, 1909*
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