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## BLACK WOMEN’S LABOR: ECONOMICS, CULTURE, AND POLITICS

# “Fighting Their Own Economic Battles”: Saint Charles Lockett, Ethnic Enterprizes, and the Challenges of Black Capitalism in 1970s Milwaukee

Crystal M. Moten

*This article examines African American businesswoman Saint Charles Lockett, a self-proclaimed feminist and Ethnic Enterprizes, her company. Established in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1970 at the height of deindustrialization and Black Power, as well as the dawn of neoliberalism, Ethnic Enterprizes hired mothers who received welfare benefits. Its goal was to be a “gateway to gainful employment.” After receiving numerous accolades, Lockett and Ethnic Enterprizes became mired in controversy because of its inability to pay its mother workforce more than the minimum wage. This led to its demise. Lockett and her firm deserve serious analysis because they provide an opportunity to examine a myriad of issues related to black working women, economic development, and the challenges of black capitalism in the urban industrial Midwest. Ethnic Enterprizes was Lockett’s response to black women’s exclusion from the industrial labor force, a route to black economic community development, and a vision for what could be possible for black working women. While examining the story of Saint Charles Lockett and Ethnic Enterprizes highlights the difficulties of excavating the voices of black working women who have been marginalized in the urban, industrial landscape, it also provides opportunities for theorizing about ways to magnify their voices in the historical record.*

*Keywords: Black capitalism, black power, labor, precarity, working-class women*

When African American working woman-turned-entrepreneur Saint Charles Lockett opened Ethnic Enterprises (EE) in the spring of 1970, she had no idea that her small parts manufacturing company in the heart of Milwaukee would become Wisconsin's largest black-owned business in fewer than five years. Also, while she faced an uphill battle in starting the business, she certainly could not predict that leading social justice activists in the city, such as Fathers James Groppi and Dismas Becker, would criticize her economic initiatives or that the Department of Labor would sue her. Lockett, a self-proclaimed feminist, saw EE as a solution to the problem of unemployment that plagued poor African American mothers on welfare in Milwaukee—her target workforce. Even though some of her business practices spoke to the needs of these mothers, she probably did not expect she would be called a dictator or that some would refer to EE as “slave labor.” This article examines the paradox of Saint Charles Lockett and EE and it recognizes her black manufacturing business and community development venture as innovative, especially in an industry dominated by corporations led by white men. The article also considers how EE contributed to black working-class women's increased precarity in Milwaukee's urban, post-industrial labor market at the dawn of neoliberalism amid conversations about black capitalism and economic self-determination. Finally, the article connects gaps in the historical record about Lockett and her business endeavor to larger methodological problems that emerge when analyzing the lives of black working-class women.

### **Situating and Positioning Lockett and EE**

Precarity is an important frame for this article, especially as it relates to Judith Butler's recent theoretical intervention.<sup>1</sup> Butler defines precarity as “that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence and death.”<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Butler says that these “populations are at heightened risks of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement and exposure to violence without protection.”<sup>3</sup> In this article, I use this framework to assess black working-class women's experiences in the urban, post-industrial labor market. Poor African American female workers, especially mothers who received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) grants, lived precarious lives. Subjected to the physical, economic and psychological violence of urban poverty, these women appealed to the state for protection and resources.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, however, as Butler asserts, “to rely on the nation-state for protection from violence is precisely to exchange one potential form of violence for another.”<sup>5</sup> Lockett envisioned herself as diminishing poor black mother's exposure to poverty and economic displacement. Yet, at the same time, she maximized their condition of precarity through some of her businesses practices.<sup>6</sup> Relying on Lockett for employment and economic mobility, these mothers effectively exchanged the violence of the welfare system for the violence of the racist, capitalist, patriarchal manufacturing industry.

Precarity is also an appropriate frame for analyzing Saint Charles Lockett's life prior to EE's success. Lockett's ability to start her own business and become a successful entrepreneur in a male-dominated industry does not negate the challenges she experienced before attaining economic stability. After she had "made it," by society's standards, Lockett created EE in response to black women's exclusion from the industrial labor force. She saw her company as a route to black economic community development and a vision for what could be possible—black women working in manufacturing industries, obtaining decent wages, and engaging in labor outside the home that would recognize their roles as mothers, heads of households, and workers. While Lockett received much national and local recognition for the ingenuity of her business, her strongest critics saw EE as decreasing the number of higher paid, more secure union jobs in Milwaukee's manufacturing industry and failing to pay its workers a living wage. Despite these triumphs and challenges, the story of Ethnic Enterprises is not a simple story of black business success or failure. Instead, we can use EE as an opportunity to both assess the precarious nature of black women's struggles to gain footholds in the industrial labor force and examine the various disagreements that erupted over black economic progress in the city.

Lockett's rise from the working class to highly successful businesswoman can only be understood within this historical context, especially as she negotiated a space for herself between Black Power and black capitalism. While Lockett never publicly identified as a Black Power advocate, analyzing her business illuminates major debates circulating during the time around the meaning of Black Power, community control, and economic self-determination.<sup>7</sup> Black nationalists developed grassroots organizations and community development corporations to bring economic justice to black communities across the country.<sup>8</sup> Also, there were competing ideas over the meaning of black capitalism. On the one hand, some black entrepreneurs saw promise in Richard Nixon's Black Capitalism presidential campaign initiative, which he brought to fruition once elected. On the other hand, those who opposed Nixon's initiative criticized it as "another camouflaged effort to reassert white control over" African American urban communities. But entrepreneurs like Lockett appeared to benefit directly from the initiative.<sup>9</sup> The gains achieved by EE were accompanied by much scrutiny, which coupled with deindustrialization and a Department of Labor lawsuit, eventually caused Lockett to close EE and pursue other economic opportunities.

The process of excavating the story of Saint Charles Lockett and EE, as well as the experiences of her mother workforce, sheds light on the limits and possibilities of studying urban black working women, especially poor working women. Because Lockett and EE became mired in controversy, tracing the record of the company and its workers was extremely difficult. Company records have proved impossible to locate and while oral history interviews would seem like a viable way to get at the history of this company when the textual record ran dry, Lockett passed away before anyone had the opportunity to interview her after the demise of her company. Additionally, her family members knew little about the business and those who did refused to be interviewed for unknown reasons. Furthermore, while the names of

some of her administrative and managerial staff have been recovered, communicating with them has proved impossible. Because Lockett stood at the intersection of a number of historical moments, both the triumphs and challenges of her endeavor have faded from view. Therefore, piecing together the story of EE has come from a careful and creative reading of the available archival texts as well as black and mainstream newspapers. These texts and articles, of course, provide more insight about Lockett, local leaders' responses to EE and the ensuing legal case, than they do about her nearly 150-member mother workforce. The notable absence of Lockett's mother workforce in the historical record prompts us to ask why and this will be addressed in the conclusion.

### **The Labor Precarity of Black Working Women and EE as a Solution**

Lockett became a highly successful businesswoman, but only after she experienced a work history that was familiar to most black female workers.<sup>10</sup> Shut out from industrial employment opportunities, black working women like Lockett found themselves in particularly precarious positions as they tried a number of jobs and moved from city to city looking for economic opportunities. After many attempts, some black working women gained employment in manufacturing industries, but they were often subject to discriminatory treatment at the hands of foremen and other white workers, both male and female.<sup>11</sup> Lockett eventually found employment in the industrial labor force, but only after she had worked as a beautician, truck driver, and at other "difficult, sweat-bearing jobs." Prior to living in Milwaukee, Lockett lived in Pennsylvania, California, and New York.<sup>12</sup> After twenty years of industrial experience, Lockett entered the Milwaukee labor force as a skilled worker.

Lockett moved to Milwaukee in 1967, joining the long chain of African Americans who migrated to Milwaukee during the post World War II period—the late great migration. From 1940–70, the African American population in Milwaukee increased dramatically, from 3.4% to 14.65%.<sup>13</sup> Unlike Lockett, most African Americans who converged on Milwaukee during this period migrated from southern states and nearby Chicago. Black male migrants proved more fortunate than black female migrants and could obtain work in the city's manufacturing industries. Detailing this dynamic, Leo Smith, a manufacturing worker, exclaimed, "You could quit one job in the morning and get another one in the afternoon."<sup>14</sup> Employment data confirmed Swift's assertion; from the 1950s through the 1970s, an average of 75% of black employed men worked in Milwaukee's manufacturing industries.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, black working women's experiences contrasted greatly. For instance, over the same 20-year period, on average nearly half of black working women, 46%, worked in service industries. This included domestic service, and service work in restaurants, hospitals, and offices.<sup>16</sup> On average only one quarter of black working women found employment in Milwaukee's manufacturing industries.<sup>17</sup> Obtaining positions in the clerical labor force proved just as difficult for black women, although by 1970 some gains had been made.<sup>18</sup> Differences in salaries prompted African American women to pursue employment in manufacturing. Data released by Women's Bureau of the United

States Department of Labor in May 1970 stated that the median wage for full-time workers engaged in private household employment was a mere \$1,523.<sup>19</sup> When compared to the median wage earned by black female manufacturing operatives in Milwaukee, which was \$3,751 annually, African American women's aspirations to attain these more desirable jobs are made abundantly clear.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the perception of the availability of jobs for black men, employment discrimination persisted, and African American organizations focused their attention on economic organizing. For example, Milwaukee chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Urban League used their connections with white powerbrokers in the city to agitate for professional jobs and higher paying industrial jobs for black workers.<sup>21</sup> New associations sprouted up, and by the late 1950s, black community leader Calvin Sherard, originally from Atlanta, Georgia, created the Crusaders Civic and Social League, a group that organized working-class African Americans.<sup>22</sup> Some of its early economic activities centered on boycotting white businesses, mostly grocery stores, because they depended on black consumerism but refused to hire black workers. This organization eventually affiliated with the Negro American Labor Council and created a local chapter. With its affiliation with the Negro American Labor Council, the group turned its attention to increasing the number of black workers in union jobs and in trades, a move that significantly narrowed the group's economic agenda.<sup>23</sup> While some African Americans joined unions at their companies, beyond Sherard's early work, there was little effort to organize black workers in the city on a large scale. By the time Lockett arrived, manufacturing jobs were in steady decline due to the deindustrialization affecting many urban midwestern cities.<sup>24</sup>

Upon her relocation to Milwaukee in 1967, Lockett took a job with the Wisconsin State Employment Service as a job developer. In this position Lockett helped workers find jobs by placing them in training programs or referring them directly to open positions in manufacturing companies or businesses across the city. As a result, Lockett came into contact with many unemployed black workers and saw "firsthand the dehumanizing hopelessness inner city poverty can breed."<sup>25</sup> Indeed, by the time Lockett arrived to Milwaukee, the inner city, where the majority of the city's black residents lived, faced unprecedented poverty and unemployment. By 1970, Milwaukee's north side, where the majority of African American and low-income people resided, was severely economically depressed.<sup>26</sup> While several manufacturing firms still existed, many had moved out of the city, scaled back operations, and decreased their workforces.<sup>27</sup>

In 1970, the unemployment rate for the inner city was 7.8%, compared to 4.1% for the city overall.<sup>28</sup> Also in 1970, nearly 48% of inner city residents were excluded from the labor force, compared with 41% of the city of Milwaukee.<sup>29</sup> More startling data is revealed when specific neighborhoods within Milwaukee's inner city were considered. For example, in 1970, 65% of residents in the Hillside Lapham neighborhood were excluded from the labor force.<sup>30</sup> This statistic is especially troubling and relevant as the Hillside Lapham community included the Hillside Terrace, the public housing project that black community activists

fought for in the 1940s.<sup>31</sup> The impact of job loss on inner city residents went hand in hand with increasing levels of poverty.<sup>32</sup> In 1969, 29% of inner city residents lived in poverty, compared with 11% for the city.<sup>33</sup> By 1979, the percentage of inner city residents living in poverty increased to 37%, compared to 13% for the city of Milwaukee at large. In 1969, 69% of the residents in the Hillside Lapham neighborhood lived in poverty.<sup>34</sup> By the 1970s, this area would be one of the most poverty stricken areas in the city. In fact, 61% of the families in this neighborhood lived below the federal poverty level.<sup>35</sup>

While poverty affected African Americans as a group, Saint Charles Lockett became keenly aware of the devastating effects of poverty on black women. In an interview about her decision to start EE, she explained that, "being a woman myself, I felt the need to reach out, to encourage, to assist these women."<sup>36</sup> Although she never stated this directly, Lockett most likely saw her own experiences in the black women she sought to help. Lockett thought the way she should do this was by creating a business that would be the "gateway to gainful employment," which was how she described EE. The company provided on- the-job training, skills development, and references for its employees. Lockett saw EE as a stepping-stone on the journey to better employment rather than the end goal itself. This philosophy would later result in controversy between Lockett and social justice and labor leaders in the city.

Lockett had herself experienced the difficulties of trying to balance full time work and mothering—both forms of labor, although the latter one was uncompensated. While the particularities of Lockett's marital relationship are unknown, by the opening of Ethnic Enterprizes she was a divorced, single mother of four.<sup>37</sup> Lockett's identity as a single working mother, head of household also connected her to the women she sought to empower. Her status as a single mother with four children to provide for added a sense of urgency to her desire to get permanent work in the industrial labor force—employment many working-class people saw as the pathway to economic security and mobility. Eventually Lockett gained manufacturing employment and became experienced in "arc and CO2 welding, blue print reading, machine operation, riveting and quality control."<sup>38</sup>

Lockett's varied work experiences gave her firsthand knowledge of black working women's vulnerable positioning in the labor force. While African Americans were assigned the hardest and dirtiest jobs, typically black men and women shared equally gruesome and low paying work assignments, although black men eventually obtained semi-skilled and skilled work at a higher rate than black women.<sup>39</sup> White women in manufacturing jobs often had more flexibility in their work assignments. The story of Frenchie Bell, an African American woman who worked at Colonial Tanning Company in Milwaukee in the 1950s, is representative of the experiences of many black women employed in Milwaukee's manufacturing companies. While her white female coworkers did piece work at a leisurely pace, Frenchie Bell was made to work on an automated line with a predetermined speed, without proper training, and with skilled male workers and told to keep up. When she could not, she was reprimanded for slowing down the line. Bell eventually went before an internal review board and her supervisor countered her accusations of discriminatory treatment by stating that

he had no problem supervising black men and therefore his behavior was not racist. Colonial's review board process was not sophisticated enough to handle intersectional complaints that hinged on race and gender, and as a result, the company fired her. Stories similar to Frenchie Bell's abound.<sup>40</sup> Black women who persisted in manufacturing work did so against tremendous odds. Lockett used her manufacturing experience to bolster her credibility in the business and professional world, and as a result fashioned different possibilities for urban industrial work.

Lockett made it known that she started EE with "practically nothing," and that the confluence of racism and sexism contributed to the difficulties she experienced.<sup>41</sup> While Lockett had years of work experience, she could not rely on personal savings to start the company. Instead, she "scraped the bottom of the larder," including selling her own car, to bring EE into existence.<sup>42</sup> Lockett benefitted from President Richard Nixon's Black Capitalism initiative, which he first popularized on March 28, 1968 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin via a radio broadcast.<sup>43</sup> Nixon proposed his Black Capitalism initiative as a way to quell the urban discontent that erupted in cities across the nation, including Milwaukee, as the promises of the civil rights movement went unfulfilled.<sup>44</sup> Nixon saw Black Capitalism, not as another government handout, but as the "imaginative enlistment of private funds, private energies, and private talents in order to develop the opportunities that lie untapped in our own underdeveloped urban heartland."<sup>45</sup> In later radio broadcasts, he articulated the structure of his Black Capitalism initiative. His plan provided tax incentives for companies that opened offices in black communities and that hired and trained "those at the bottom of the employment ladder."<sup>46</sup> To encourage private investors to provide funding, Nixon provided "expanded [Small Business Association] loans" as well as "reinsurance programs to 'reduce the risk of investment in poverty areas.'"<sup>47</sup>

Nixon's plan, however, was not the only avenue for black economic self-determination, and Lockett did not open EE in a vacuum. As she developed her own strategy for black economic development, based primarily on Nixon's model, other community members linked their programs more directly to Black Power. A local chapter of the Black Panther Party concerned itself with the pervasive poverty affecting African Americans in Milwaukee but also centered its activities around a breakfast program for children, organizing against police brutality, and serving poor and working African Americans.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, Operation Breadbasket planned employment and "support black business" initiatives. Operation Breadbasket was an initiative begun by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in Atlanta in 1962. Operation Breadbasket expanded to Chicago in 1967 and under the leadership of Reverend Jesse Jackson planned successful economic boycotts that won jobs for black workers. After its success in Chicago, Operation Breadbasket started a chapter in Milwaukee during the height of the Milwaukee NAACP Youth Council's demonstrations for open housing.<sup>49</sup> While the associate director of the local Operation Breadbasket chapter, Reverend John T. Witherspoon, believed that "Black business cannot survive on black people alone," he also asserted "the black community can become a base so that black businesses can compete in the general market place."<sup>50</sup> Organizations like Operation Breadbasket focused on the hiring



practices of white companies rather than the creation of black businesses. This is why Lockett's strategy of entrepreneurship and job creation was so ingenious.

After struggling to find a bank willing to support EE, Lockett finally convinced several liberal white businessmen to give her a loan. With the loan, she was able to lease the building that would house the factory, but as a condition of the lease, she had to live in the refurbished apartment housed on the top floor of the building. Lockett lived far from a glamorous life; she lived and worked in the same community as her mother workforce. In fact, when interviewed about the hardship she experienced starting EE, Lockett commented that both race and gender made her journey arduous. While racism contributed to the difficulties she faced when trying to open her business, Lockett noted, "even more so than being Black, I think I encountered more discrimination because of the fact that I'm a woman with enough gall or effrontery or whatever chauvinistic men usually call it to challenge in a field that has too long been dominated by men."<sup>51</sup> Race, class, and gender contributed to the challenges of opening Milwaukee's first black manufacturing company tailored to poor African American women.

As a black woman in a white male-dominated field, in addition to struggling to drum up the initial resources for a building and supplies, Lockett also had to persuade manufacturing companies to purchase contracts. The more contracts Lockett could win, the more workers she could hire. Lockett won one of her first contracts from American Motors, and as a result, she became the first black contractor and woman hired by the company. Subsequent contracts came from Allen Bradley, Oster, Western Electric, and Chrysler.<sup>52</sup> Lockett's mother workforce engaged in a number of tasks, including "packaging nuts and bolts," "assembling electric motor components," and "bolting together telephone relay mounting boards."<sup>53</sup> Workers also performed quality control tests for these same companies. Often, the work they performed was painstakingly tedious, but workers completed their tasks in a relaxed, friendly, air-conditioned environment. Lockett allowed mothers to bring their own radios and depending on the task, they could even drink coffee on the job. Since many of the mothers Lockett employed had never worked in a manufacturing company, Lockett asserted it was her goal "to make this new experience a good one" for them.<sup>54</sup> A 1000-plus waitlist was a testament to mothers' need and interest in working at EE. Photos published in a December 1970 *Ebony* magazine photo spread of the company illustrate the environment.<sup>55</sup> Ethnic Enterprizes appeared to be unlike many of the traditional manufacturing companies in the city.

The work performed at EE may have enabled Lockett to implement policies that recognized the dual responsibility that her workers had as mothers and heads of households. Lockett allowed her workers flexibility in creating their work schedules. As a female head of household herself, she understood that these women had to get kids off to school in the morning and that sometimes their children got sick during the day. Lockett allowed women to set their own schedules and when emergencies unexpectedly came up, as long as women made up their hours and worked the set amount of hours during the week, they did not lose their positions.<sup>56</sup> The nature of EE's contract work meant that she had more flexibility with some of her policies.

Also, when the work required for a particular contract exceeded the number of workers she had available, she recruited her friends as volunteers and even worked weekends, herself, to fulfill the contracts.

While Lockett endeavored to complete her contracts as efficiently as she could, she also comprehended the economic realities many of her working mothers endured on a daily basis. Although she could not afford to pay them much more than the minimum wage, a decision for which she would later come under fire, she did recognize the absolute necessity of the earnings the mothers received. If pay dates fell after major holidays, Lockett chose to pay her workforce prior to the holiday, and sometimes before they had even worked, because she knew how important these earnings were to the women. She knew that “every payday [was] Christmas” for her workers.<sup>57</sup> Because Lockett considered EE to be a rung on the ladder to better, permanent employment, she encouraged mothers to develop and visualize long term goals. Mothers found and brought in images of what they wanted to achieve. Many of the women’s goals highlighted their sense of motherly responsibility and domesticity—they wanted to save enough money to buy working and reliable appliances to make their lives more efficient. Or, they wanted to save enough money to buy quality clothes for their children.<sup>58</sup> Lockett’s business practices spoke to her workers’ identities not only as women and consumers, but as mothers.

There are alternate ways to read some of Lockett’s policies, however. While she repeatedly stated that she implemented her practices to benefit her workforce, she would not have put them in place if they did not benefit the company as well. Furthermore, were Lockett’s policies reactive or proactive? For example, did her mother-employees speak to her about their need for flexible scheduling? If they did not speak to her directly about this, did she notice the need as a result of their actions at the workplace? Also, did a couple of workers request an early pay date to do a little holiday shopping? Lockett takes credit for coming up with many of these policies, but this removes the possibility of action and agency from her mother-employees. Perhaps it was their original actions and articulation of their needs that caused Lockett to implement some of her policies. Perhaps it was Lockett’s experiences as a working mother that prompted these policies. Unfortunately, evidence is not available to confirm the experiences of Lockett’s workforce or the ways in which they might have influenced her business practices and company policies. However, raising questions about their involvement can bring them out of the background and into the conversation, even though there is only the slightest possibility of their responses.

Lockett’s identity as a black woman, mother, migrant, and worker connected her to the mother workers she employed. She understood black women’s historic and precarious positioning in the labor market and their labor “from generation to generation, as cook, washerwoman, manny [sic.] and servant to the world.”<sup>59</sup> However, Lockett also believed the time had now come for black women to “realize [their] net worth as a competitive force in the business world.”<sup>60</sup> Therefore, EE’s vision was “to provide their employees with the necessary job training and experiences to be able to move up the economic ladder to a higher and better paying job in industry.”<sup>61</sup> By providing her mother workers with training and experience, in effect,

Lockett hoped to stabilize their precarious conditions and propel them forward on their journey to economic mobility.

All in all, Lockett considered working to be “a prize,” which alludes to why she named her company *Ethnic Enterprizes*. The “prize” highlighted the “prize of entering gainful employment.”<sup>62</sup> While Lockett most likely desired to emphasize the benefits of gainful, permanent employment, referring to work as a prize also demonstrates the difficulty of industrial work during this era—there were not enough “prizes” to go around. As a result, the prize of gainful manufacturing work for black working women was like winning the lottery—one could play the game, but only a few could actually win. This points to the difficulty of Lockett’s entrepreneurial endeavor. Despite the training and references, only a few would actually benefit from the work of *Ethnic Enterprizes*. Due to the relatively small impact of the company and because of its low wages, Lockett’s greatest detractors accused her of exploitation and of being the sole beneficiary of EE’s success.

Saint Charles Lockett received many awards for the success of EE, but because no company records have been located, it is not clear whether the company was actually financially solvent. What is known is that in addition to operating EE, Lockett had to supplement her income. She continued to work as a beautician and as a consultant to several national corporations.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, every year the company sponsored benefit fundraisers that served dual purposes—to recognize mothers in the community and to provide financial resources to the company. In 1976, EE held a dinner for all of its clients. The purpose of the dinner was “to boost support for its declining business,” which had, at its height, employed 150 workers, but in 1976 had shrunk to a workforce of 65.<sup>64</sup>

By 1980, Lockett, unable to keep the company afloat, moved on to pursuing opportunities in the beauty and entertainment industry full time, particularly through her consulting work with Abbott Laboratories and the ABC Sunday television program, *For You ... Black Woman*. Lockett had been with the show as a consultant since the inception of EE, but after the company’s demise, she became the show’s executive director, hairdresser, and international consultant.<sup>65</sup> Described as, “dealing with controversial subjects of interest to black women,” the show, broadcast from New York, televised “discussions on how black women ‘are coming into their own and are no longer relying on white women or men to set the pace for what is to come in their lives.’”<sup>66</sup>

Lockett was unable to keep EE afloat for a number of critical reasons. While the newspaper articles that profiled her in the late 1970s alluded to Lockett’s life as one “filled with adventure, romance, hardship, success, hard work and controversy,” interviews with Lockett did not get into the specifics about the demise of the company, only to say that “Saint literally gave her business to her employees.”<sup>67</sup> This short description of EE’s ultimate failure implies that Lockett poured the company’s financial resources into EE’s workforce and as a result, EE was unable to sustain itself. Missing from these profiles on Lockett’s transition to the television industry was an explanation of the controversy that engulfed her and EE—a controversy that revolved around the diverse meanings of black economic self-determination that circulated in Milwaukee during the 1970s.

### **Debating Black Capitalism in Postwar Milwaukee**

Economic justice has long been a central goal in local black freedom struggles with African Americans debating the specific ideologies and movement strategies that might lead to economic equality. By the mid 1960s, the welfare rights movement emerged in Milwaukee, and across the nation, as a result of the unfinished economic promises of the civil rights movement.<sup>68</sup> Like many northern, urban locales, civil rights activism illuminated black people's ongoing economic struggles and coincided with direct action movements for economic justice. As civil rights insurgency declined in Milwaukee, welfare rights organizing increased and the nature of social justice activism changed. Led and organized by poor mothers of color, Milwaukee's welfare rights movement brought with it a focus on families, children, and motherhood. This was a drastic change from the character of civil rights organizing in the city, which highlighted traditional civil rights issues such as fair housing and school desegregation. Fair housing and desegregation definitely affected women, but a masculinist approach to leadership and social change often obscured women's participation and interests.<sup>69</sup> Saint Charles Lockett's status as a vocal business leader placed her directly in the center of ongoing debates about gender, motherhood, work, and welfare rights. Because employee records are not available, it is difficult to ascertain whether any of her workers participated in the welfare rights movement that had engulfed the city. Even still, this movement affected Lockett directly.

The Milwaukee County Welfare Rights Organization (MCWRO), which had become the leading welfare rights organization in the city, co-sponsored a protest of EE.<sup>70</sup> Established in October of 1969, the MCWRO formed after mothers marched 90 miles from Milwaukee to Madison, WI, the state capitol, to protest drastic cuts to the AFDC proposed by the state legislature.<sup>71</sup> After staging what some would call an unsuccessful protest and takeover of the state legislature, the cuts were not restored. The governor called in the National Guard, and arrested several protestors, including the group's spokesperson, Father James Groppi, a white Catholic priest and a well-known civil rights–turned–welfare rights activist. After the protests in Madison, welfare rights activists came back to Milwaukee “determined to fight.”<sup>72</sup>

Hot off of the heels of this campaign, Saint Charles Lockett and EE garnered the attention of the MCWRO. Under the leadership of Father Groppi, welfare rights activists demonstrated outside of EE and accused the company of “slave labor” because of the wages Lockett paid her employees. Lockett could only pay her employees the minimum wage rate of \$1.70 an hour, which was much lower than what the larger manufacturing companies typically paid. Depending on skill, workers could receive raises. While there were some who had received raises, many still received the minimum wage. Lockett asserted that once women gained experience they were usually able to apply to jobs with other companies. Because they could use Lockett as a reference, her former employees usually received favorable results. While there is no official data of how many women Lockett successfully placed in jobs after having working at EE, by 1973 Lockett reported that she had placed thirty-six women in better jobs and had referred more than 250 others.<sup>73</sup> Lockett mentioned that she constantly hired new

women because of the rate at which her employees received better, higher paying jobs.<sup>74</sup> This did not satisfy members of the MCWRO, and they continued to publicly denounce the company.

While Lockett's inability to pay her workers more than the minimum wage was not illegal, this policy upset welfare rights activists who were engaged in a fight for a guaranteed adequate income that would provide all poor people with a living wage.<sup>75</sup> Although they worked, Lockett's mother workers were still dependent on their AFDC grants to live. For this reason, welfare rights activists continually criticized Lockett. They found nothing positive in her decisions to live in her community, devote all of her financial resources to EE, use her contacts to get better jobs for others, and support other black businesses. Instead, they claimed EE's vice, low wages, tended to outweigh its alleged virtues.

The most acute criticism came four years after EE opened. Father Groppi led the attack on Lockett. Local news outlets quoted scathing remarks Groppi made at a Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) meeting in the city in August of 1974.<sup>76</sup> Groppi accused Lockett of stealing union jobs away from black workers and stated that with the low wages Lockett paid her workers, "they're better off on welfare."<sup>77</sup> He continued that, "If people are doing union work, they should be paid union wages so they can get off welfare."<sup>78</sup> Groppi claimed Lockett never attempted to form a coalition with welfare rights activists and that she exploited her workers. Groppi was not the only welfare rights leader that criticized Lockett. Father Dismas Becker, another white Catholic priest who advised the MCWRO, ran his campaign for county supervisor with a platform that specifically called out EE.<sup>79</sup>

Lockett responded to her critics by taking drastic measures. In response to Groppi's denigrating comments, she fired her workforce and told them to go to Father Groppi for employment.<sup>80</sup> Lockett eventually reinstated her workers, but not without making a larger point that even though EE did not solve all of the economic and employment difficulties African American Milwaukeeans faced, it was a small step in a positive direction. Lockett reaffirmed her commitment to poor mothers in the city by stating, "We want to give our employees the training and living conditions they have been denied."<sup>81</sup> According to *The Milwaukee Journal* article that broke this news story, Lockett stated that while her company was a profit-making venture, it was committed to social responsibility.<sup>82</sup> As a result of the actions of these welfare rights leaders, other African American leaders publicly denounced Groppi and voiced their support of Lockett.<sup>83</sup>

Lawyer and prominent civil rights activist Lloyd Barbee remarked that, "It's an insult to Black progress for Groppi to compare St. Charles Lockett to a puppeteer and a dictator. Milwaukee Blacks can and should fight their own economic battles."<sup>84</sup> While there might have been other African American activists or politicians who disagreed with Lockett's business practices, they did not use the mainstream media to voice their discontent. Instead, they publicly supported Lockett's efforts. Indeed, state senator, Monroe Swan, "joined the list of Black politicians, businessmen and activists who ... expressed moral and political outrage at the recent attacks made by Father James E. Groppi against Saint Charles Lockett."<sup>85</sup> In a letter published by leading

African American newspaper *The Milwaukee Star-Times*, Swan mentioned that he read Groppi's attacks and had followed up with Saint Charles Lockett. As a result of his conversations with Lockett and his personal knowledge of EE's contributions, he demanded Groppi retract his statements. Swan detailed several reasons for the retraction. He noted the empirical evidence that he had of Lockett's work in "providing training and jobs for disadvantaged people within this community." Swan spoke to the fact that employment at EE "enabled [workers] to acquire even better employment at other places." He also asserted his interest in the development of black business in Milwaukee, in which Lockett was at the vanguard of this effort. Lastly, Swan ended his letter with a sharp condemnation of Groppi, describing black Milwaukeeans's "resentment against the fact that a white man would take the lead in efforts to disrupt or destroy a significant Black economic development venture in this community."<sup>86</sup>

The debate that swirled around EE exposed the differing views surrounding black nationalism, black capitalism, and Black Power. Although Father Groppi identified as a Black Power advocate, the Black Power he affirmed emerged out of a particular, interracial Milwaukee context. According to historian Patrick Jones, "cultivating indigenous African American leadership, particularly among young black men and projecting a masculine verbosity and toughness of style, [Black Power] included building African American institutions and encompassed race pride, self determination, and not-violence."<sup>87</sup> Groppi and the NAACP Youth Council were the most visible supporters of Black Power in the city, and they used the ideology to guide their demonstrations and protests. Although Groppi and the Youth Council's version of Black Power sought to empower black institutions, their economic philosophy centered on demanding black workers obtain access to jobs in the city's manufacturing industries. While Lloyd Barbee and Monroe Swan would agree with the need to increase access to manufacturing jobs, they found Groppi's attack on Lockett to be unfounded and detrimental to the development of black businesses in the city.<sup>88</sup>

Deborah Crosby, the managing editor of *The Milwaukee Star Times*, most clearly promoted a Black Power agenda as she weighed in on the situation through an editorial she published shortly after the story first hit the mainstream, white media outlets. In her "Message to the People" editorial, Crosby accused Groppi of ignoring the real problems, which she articulated as "the blatantly racist attitudes and policies of the labor unions themselves." These were labor unions that Groppi stressed blacks should fight for membership.<sup>89</sup> Crosby lambasted Groppi for saying nothing regarding "the exploitation of Black and other non-white workers by big business and capitalist industry" or "the festering dehumanization within the Milwaukee County Department of Public Welfare."<sup>90</sup> Instead of focusing on these larger issues, Groppi chose to attack EE, not without fault according to Crosby, but in the grand scheme of things, "just a tiny drop in the bucket compared to the games being run on us by the money-mongering slave traders who run this city and country."<sup>91</sup> Crosby criticized Groppi's motivation and questioned whose side he really was on. Ultimately, she raised the question, "out of all the contradiction and all the organized efforts to

keep power concentrated just where it is—out of the hands of black people—why zero in on Ethnic”?<sup>92</sup> Clearly staking a claim for black power, Crosby ended her editorial by blatantly declaring:

Let's do ourselves a favor and think very deeply before we go running up behind another white man and stabbing our own people in the back. If we can't deal with our own problems without interference from the "good guy" in the white skins, then we might as well forget about self-determination, self-sufficiency, and controlling our own destinies.<sup>93</sup>

A week after Crosby's editorial ran in the *Milwaukee Star Times*, the newspaper published another article clarifying the CBTU's stance on EE. According to Sandra Jones, the secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee chapter, the participants at the CBTU regional meeting were misinformed about EE. Echoing Crosby's editorial the week before, Jones stated that the "real fight is with the big corporations like Allen Bradley and General Motors." Jones continued, "We see Ms. Lockett as being used by these companies, which are the ones who are really benefitting from that relationship. Our fight is with them, not her."<sup>94</sup> While the CBTU did affirm its stance against subcontracting work, "because it takes work away from other workers," Jones did confirm that the CBTU had not received adequate information about EE and instead had relied on the incomplete information received from Father Groppi. Distancing the organization from Groppi, Sandra Jones concluded that the CBTU should not have "taken a position on that particular company."

In addition to the conflict with Groppi, the Department of Labor (DOL) investigated Lockett's company and sued her, which validated some of Groppi's accusations about Lockett's practice of paying her workers low wages.<sup>95</sup> Some even attributed the DOL lawsuit to the publicity surrounding the Groppi conflict. According to the DOL, Lockett actually had not been paying all of her workers the minimum wage. Lockett admitted that she had not paid certain members of her workforce the minimum wage—particularly those who had physical disabilities that caused them to perform the work at a slower rate. Lockett did not know that she could apply for special approval to pay these workers at a reduced rate. Once she learned this information, she filed the appropriate paperwork. As a result of the lawsuit, Lockett had to pay the underpaid workers back pay.<sup>96</sup> This, coupled with declining contracts and deindustrialization, resulted in the company's financial insolvency.

### **Conclusion: Excavating Black Working Women's Lives in the Historical Record**

The initial success of EE catapulted Saint Charles Lockett to national acclaim and gave her a platform to promote black women's interest in the media, especially through her work as an executive director for the television show *For You Black Woman*.<sup>97</sup> However, this was not enough to ensure Lockett's preservation in the historical narrative even though her work intersected with many ongoing local and national debates. After 1980, Lockett disappears from the record.

The narratives and primary texts concerning the lives of black working women have been differentially exposed to erasure, resulting in their near excision from the historical record. Prone to intellectual injury and analytical violence, resulting in dismemory—a removal from collective memory—the excavation of black working women’s narratives is marked with precarity. Yet, the potential and possibilities of studying black working women far outweigh the limitations of the current archival record. Many researchers have recognized the importance of oral history in creating a new archive of black working women’s voices, but as we leave the 20th century further behind, our ability to use oral history to understand black working women during this period decreases. To ensure that the stories of present generations of working women are not lost, researchers have to continue to find ways to encourage black working women to see that their voices and experiences are crucial to understanding the present and the past. We need to include them as we do the work of (re)membering—as in putting back together—the past and casting visions for the future.

Historians such as Sharon Harley, Cheryl Hicks, Tera Hunter, and Jacqueline Jones have paved the way for researching and writing about the social, political, and economic lives of black working women.<sup>98</sup> They have provided new methodologies and analytical tools for helping subsequent generations of historians access and assess the complexity of these women’s lives. These historians have looked for black working women in obvious and not-so-obvious places. They have also questioned scholarship that would seek to erase black women from narratives of work, labor, and politics. Still, the dilemma remains—in many cases, traces of black working women’s lives have been intentionally excised from entire histories. Yet, we know they were there. The case of Saint Charles Lockett and EE is instructive.

Even though Saint Charles Lockett identified with black working mothers, she contributed to their precarious economic experiences. The ingenuity of Lockett’s idea was that she at least brought poor black working mothers to the table. She also recognized their existence and tried to respond to their needs, even if they were in the best interest of her company. The difficulty is that once she brought them to the table, she treated them as if they were disposable, and she literally fired them to make a point—without any regard for their lives or well-being. Lockett wielded her power dangerously. It seems she had become so far removed from the plight of poor working women that she did not consider that even the slightest shift in their already precarious positions could have devastating results.

But the story of Saint Charles Lockett and EE is illustrative beyond the historical lessons that it reiterates about the precarious conditions of black working women’s lives. As mentioned earlier, although this is the first scholarly work that has seriously considered Lockett and her company, Lockett and EE did manage to make it into the historical record—and yet we still missed her story. Why? Black working women, their resistance strategies, and their contributions can easily be missed because of the way researchers approach historical records. We come to the research with labels and analytical frames—which are necessary at times—and forget to follow the sources. Most times, the stories of black working women’s lives do not fall easily into our categories or historiographical trends—their lives complicate the narrative.



We also sometimes miss the work of black women because they are not necessarily describing their lives in the language that we are using to construct their narratives. Often black working women do their work on the sidelines, without any labels because aligning themselves with particular ideologies or to one cause or another might make their positioning more precarious. This is a risk some might be unwilling to take.

So what do we do? We keep creating the archive we want to draw on for the stories that will illuminate the diverse lives and experiences of African American working women. When we find black working women and their lives in the historical record, we must stop, listen, and wait for them to help us understand their stories. We must carefully heal the wounds of history by recovering the sources and rewriting the narrative as wholly as we can.

### **Acknowledgments**

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### **Notes**

1. Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London and New York: Verso, 2009). See also, Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).
2. Butler, *Frames of War*, 25–26.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ethnic Enterprizes was a part of Wisconsin's Work Incentive Program (WIN), which came about after the 1967 reforms to the national Social Security Act. This program created a national Work Incentive Program, which required mothers who received welfare benefits to work. According to Premilla Nadasen and Marisa Chappel, who write about the history of WIN, the program "required states to refer a portion of their AFDC population with school-age children to work programs and, as an incentive to enter the labor market, allowed recipients to keep the first \$30 of their wages and one-third of anything beyond that without losing benefits." Premilla Nadesen, Jennifer Mittelstadt, and Marisa Chappell, *Welfare in the United States: A History with Documents, 1935–1966* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 43. Social workers referred AFDC recipients to Ethnic Enterprizes for employment.
7. Several scholars have characterized this debate in their work on Black Power. See: Jeffery Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Robert Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992); Robert Weems and Lewis A. Randolph, *Business in Black and White: American Presidents and Black Entrepreneurs in the 20th Century* (New York: NYU Press, 2009). See also: Juliet E.K. Walker, *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998) and Robert E. Weems, *Black Business in the Black Metropolis: The Chicago Metropolitan Assurance Company, 1925–1985* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

8. *The Business of Black Power: Community Development, Capitalism and Corporate Responsibility on Postwar America*, edited by Laura Warren Hill and Julia Rabig (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012).
9. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, 230.
10. Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2009, 1985).
11. Crystal Moten, “‘Kept Right on Fightin ...’: African American Working Women’s Economic Activism in Civil Rights Era Milwaukee,” *Journal of Civil and Human Rights* 2, no. 1 (2016).
12. “This Prize Came Hard: Saint Fought Sexism, Racism,” *Milwaukee Star Times*, April 5, 1973.
13. Paul Geib refers to this period as the “late, great Migration.” Paul Geib, “From Mississippi to Milwaukee: A Case Study of Southern Black Migration to Milwaukee, 1940–1970,” *The Journal of Negro History* 83, no. 4 (Autumn, 1998): 231.
14. Leo Swift as quoted in “From Mississippi to Milwaukee,” *ibid.*, 233.
15. Data for each decade between 1950 and 1970 is as follows: 1950: 79.4%; 1960: 70.2%; 1970: 74.1%. *ibid.*, 242.
16. Data for Black women employed in the service occupations for each decade between 1950 and 1970 is as follows: 1950: 51.8%; 1960: 48.3%; 1970: 38%. United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Characteristics of the Population, Number of Inhabitants, General and Detailed Characteristics of the Population Part 49, 51* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1952, 1963, 1973).
17. Data for Black women employed in manufacturing occupations for each decade between 1950 and 1970 is as follows: 1950: 30%; 1960: 23.7%; 1970: 23%. United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Characteristics of the Population, Number of Inhabitants, General and Detailed Characteristics of the Population Part 49, 51* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1952, 1963, 1973).
18. Data for Black women employed in clerical positions in each decade between 1950 and 1970 is as follows: 1950: 5.1%; 1960: 7.4%; 1970: 22%. United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Characteristics of the Population, Number of Inhabitants, General and Detailed Characteristics of the Population Part 49, 51* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1952, 1963, 1973).
19. Women’s Bureau, “Women Private Household Workers Fact Sheet” (United States Department of Labor, May 1970).
20. African American female clerical workers earned slightly less. In Milwaukee, the median earnings in 1969 for this group were \$3,502. Bureau of the Census, *Characteristics of the Population, Volume 1: Part 51 Wisconsin, Table 93, Occupations and Earnings of the Negro Population for Areas and Places: 1970, 51–319*.
21. Joe Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Urban Industrial Proletariat* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 196–225.
22. Patrick Jones, *Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 42.
23. *Ibid.*
24. For more on the decline of the industrial Midwest, see the following rustbelt literature: Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America’s Rust Belt, 1969–1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003). Also see, Thomas Sugrue for a treatment on the affect of deindustrialization on urban poverty: *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).
25. “This Prize Came Hard.”
26. Marc Levine, “The Economic State of Milwaukee’s Inner City: 1970–2000,” University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Center for Economic Development, 2002.
27. *Ibid.*, 15.

28. The University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee’s Center for Economic Development (CED) published a report that examined the “Economic State of Milwaukee’s Inner City from 1970–2000.” This report put both inner city unemployment and poverty rates in stark relief. The CED report asserts that the unemployment rate does not paint a complete picture of inner city residents’ employment situation. A better way to understand the absence of work in the inner city, according to the report, is to analyze “labor force exclusion.” Those excluded from participating in the labor force included everyone 16 or older who were either unemployed or not in the labor force. Those not in the labor force could include people in school, in prison, or who had stopped looking for work—populations that unemployment data would not capture. When these more inclusive statistics are considered, an unfortunate reality is illuminated: inner city labor force exclusion exceeded the entire city as a whole. Levine, “The Economic State of Milwaukee’s Inner City:1970–2000,” 15.
29. *Ibid.*, 17. The fact that more inner city residents were excluded from the labor force is not surprising because it is typical that poor and low-income people tend to reside in the inner city.
30. *Ibid.*, 18.
31. Trotter, *Black Milwaukee*, 175–88.
32. Jane Collins and Victoria Mayer, *Both Hands Tied: Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom in the Low Wage Labor Market* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
33. Levine, “The Economic State of Milwaukee’s Inner City:1970–2000,” 25.
34. *Ibid.*, 26.
35. *Ibid.*, 27.
36. “This Prize Came Hard.”
37. “Woman Power Can Move Anything: All Girl Plant Only Hires Welfare Moms,” *Ebony* (December 1970).
38. “This Prize Came Hard.”
39. Enobong Branch, *Opportunity Denied: Limiting Black Women to Devalued Work* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 71–96.
40. Crystal Moten, “Kept Right on Fightin.”
41. “This Prize Came Hard.”
42. *Ibid.*
43. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, 227.
44. Jones, *Selma of the North*, 143–68.
45. President Richard Nixon, as quoted in Robert Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, 228.
46. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, 230.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Andrew Witt, *The Black Panthers in the Midwest: The Community Programs and Services of the Black Panther Party in Milwaukee, 1966–1977* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
49. “Dr. King Said to Support Milwaukee Demonstration,” *The Chicago Defender*, September 23, 1967. Jones, *Selma of the North*, 169–209.
50. Edward Blackwell, “Slow Start Overcome, ‘Breadbasket’ Rolling,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, February 7, 1971; “Job Group Will Aim at Food Firms Here,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, August 30, 1967.
51. “This Prize Came Hard.”
52. Dorothy Austin, “Jobs to Fit My People,” *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 29, 1972; “Woman Power Can Move Anything,” 89–96.
53. “Woman Power Can Move Anything,” 91.
54. *Ibid.*, 94.
55. *Ibid.* While the photo spread does illustrate the inside of the factory, it should be noted that these images were far from candid.

56. Dorothy Austin, "Jobs to Fit My People," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 29, 1972; Edward H. Blackwell, "Ripped by Groppi, Firm Lays Off 102," *The Milwaukee Journal* August 7, 1974; "Woman Power Can Move Anything," 89–96.
57. Jean Otto, "She Considers Working a Prize," *The Milwaukee Journal*, July 30, 1970.
58. Ibid.; and "Woman Power Can Move Anything," 89–96. See, Janelle S. Taylor, Linda L. Layne, and Danielle Wozniak, *Consuming Motherhood* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004).
59. "This Prize Came Hard."
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. "Woman Power Can Move Anything"; Jean Otto, "She Considers Working a Prize," *The Milwaukee Journal*, July 30, 1970; "This Prize Came Hard."
63. "Saint Charles Lockett Production Executive," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, January 19, 1980.
64. "Dinner for Business Clients," *The Milwaukee Journal*, November 30, 1976.
65. Evelyn Newman, "For You Black Woman's Exec Director Visits City," *Atlanta Daily World*, July 8, 1979; "Saint Charles Lockett Production Executive"; "Black Woman Series Begins Third Year of Telecasts," *Chicago Metro News*, January 26, 1980.
66. Newman, "For You Black Woman's Exec Director Visits City."
67. "Saint Charles Lockett Production Executive."
68. By the mid-1960s, the focus of the black freedom struggle began to shift. While African Americans have always considered the struggle for economic justice a crucial part of civil rights, direct action campaigns that centered on voting rights and desegregation have eclipsed many local struggles for economic justice. With the advent of the Poor People's Campaign and the Welfare Rights Movement, economic injustice began to come back to the forefront in public demonstrations. Juliet Walker asserts that the economic focus of the black freedom struggle changed in the 1960s (*The History of Black Business*, 272). Historians who have written extensively on the Welfare Rights Movement have illustrated the ways in which black women both precipitated and participated in this change of focus. My own dissertation examines the Milwaukee context. For histories of the Welfare Rights Movement, which examines the connections between campaigns for civil rights and economic justice see: Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States*; Felicia Kornbluh, *The Battle for Welfare Rights: Politics and Poverty in Modern America*; Lisa Levenstein, *A Movement Without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia*; Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*; and Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality*.
69. For a treatment on civil rights and masculinist strategies, see Steve Estes, *I Am a Man!: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement*. Patrick Jones also discusses the ways in which male leadership and masculine rhetoric obscured women participants and organizers in the Milwaukee movement in *Selma of the North*, 223–27.
70. "Genocide Protested," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 7, 1971.
71. "Milwaukee County Welfare Rights Organization Local Area Groups," Box 1, Folder 9, Dismas Becker Becker Milwaukee MSS 9, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Libraries, Archives Division. "First Annual Milwaukee County Welfare Rights Dance" Program Booklet, Fundraising and Clothing Drives, 1971–1972," Dismas Becker Papers, Milwaukee Mss 9, Box 1, Folder 7.
72. Milwaukee County Welfare Rights Organization, *Welfare Mothers Speak Out: We Ain't Gonna Shuffle Anymore* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company), 29.
73. Saint Fought Sexism, Racism."

74. Edward H. Blackwell, "Ripped by Groppi, Firm Lays Off 102," *The Milwaukee Journal*, August 7, 1974; "Woman Power Can Move Anything," 89–96.
75. Milwaukee County Welfare Rights Organization, *Welfare Mothers Speak Out*; and Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
76. Blackwell, "Ripped by Groppi, Firm Lays Off 102"; "Incredible Remark," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 12, 1974.
77. "Incredible Remark," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 12, 1974.
78. Blackwell, "Ripped by Groppi, Firm Lays Off 102."
79. "County Supervisor Campaign Brochure," Dismas Becker Papers, Milwaukee Mss 9, Box 1, Folder 7, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Libraries, Archives Division.
80. Blackwell, "Ripped by Groppi, Firm Lays Off 102."
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. "2 Officials Hit Back at Groppi," *The Milwaukee Journal*, August 13, 1974.
84. *Milwaukee Star-Times*, August 8, 1974.
85. *Milwaukee Star-Times*, August 15, 1974.
86. Ibid.
87. Jones, *Selma of the North*, 223.
88. "Motivation Question: Groppi Scored After Attack on Local Black Business," *Milwaukee Star-Times*, August 8, 1974.
89. Deborah Crosby, "Message to the People," *Milwaukee Star Times*, August 15, 1974.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. "CBTU Says Its Vote Was Misunderstood," *Milwaukee Star Times*, August 22, 1974.
95. Peter Brennan, Secretary of Labor vs. Ethnic Enterprises, Inc. Eastern District of Wisconsin. December 16, 1974; "Ethnic Enterprises Chief Says She'll Fight Wage Suit," *The Milwaukee Journal*, August, 18, 1974.
96. Brennan vs. Ethnic Enterprises, December 16, 1974.
97. Evelyn Newmann, "For You Black Woman's "Exec Director Visits City" *Atlanta Daily World*, July 8, 1979.
98. See Sharon Harley, *Black Women and Work Collective, Sister Circle: Black Women and Work* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Cheryl Hicks, *Talk with You Like a Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Reform in New York, 1890–1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*.

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