



“I have listened to all the speakers, and I have no further patience for talk.”

– Clara Lemlich, Garment Worker, New York City, November 22, 1909

Every International Women's Day - and especially this one - I'm thinking about the history of women, work, and struggle. It's no surprise that the origins of International Women's Day involved striking female garment workers in New York in 1909. The strike lasted over 3 months and was known as "The Uprising."

In 1912, thousands more workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts went on strike when their pay was cut, in an event later known as the "Bread and Roses Strike." They too, were led by women. And as they marched, they sang, owning their responsibility for the welfare of their community:

“Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes; Hearts starve as well as bodies; bread and roses, bread and roses. . . . The rising of the women means the rising of the race.”

Workplace rights that recognize the dual role of workers as caregivers is critical to women's advancement. Nowhere is that truer than in D.C., the place with the highest percentage of breadwinner mothers in the United States. 81.4 % of

mothers in D.C. are breadwinners. Working mothers make the bread, bake the bread, and break the bread.

First Shift has been doing its part to fulfill that bread and roses dream, by empowering working mothers to stand up for themselves and their families. **In 2019, we provided legal services to over 775 working mothers to help them demand that their value and their rights be honored in the workplace.** We also furthered our work to expand those rights through advocacy that brought about the introduction of D.C.'s Domestic Workers Protection Act of 2019.

This year, we will persist in the work to get the domestic workers' law passed and ensure that all eligible working mothers can take advantage of D.C.'s new paid family leave insurance benefits in July 2020. [I ask for your support in this work.](#)



As a community we need to support mothers. Because we know what side our bread is buttered on.

Happy International Women's Day.

~ Laura Brown, Executive Director

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