

AT THE INTERSECTION OF HOME AND WORK: *Domesticity, Labor, and the Contradictions of Modernity in Ecuador, 1890–1950*¹

ABSTRACT: This essay uses gender analysis to interrogate the modernization of labor organizations in Ecuador from 1890-1950, with a focus on why domestic servants were excluded in this process. Although labor organizers challenged other forms of paternalism in labor relations, they remained silent on domestic service even though it was the main source of female labor in Ecuador's growing cities. Using publications by labor organizations, laws, and social welfare records, this essay seeks to understand not what life was like for domestic servants, but to explore the contours and contradictions in the relationships between workers, labor organizers, and the state during a critical period of modernization and state formation in Ecuador. I argue that the absence of domestic servants from labor discourses defined and reinforced specific forms of masculine dignity as the core of the modern worker identity. This masculine worker identity made possible the inclusion of indigenous hacienda workers in the labor movement, but women could be incorporated only if they worked in public settings (mainly factories). Domestic servants belonged symbolically to the realm of traditional labor, and their ties to the home placed them beyond the paradigm of class exploitation.

KEYWORDS: Domestic Servants, Gender, Labor Movements, Social Conditions of Women, Masculinity, Indigenous workers

As historian Juan Manguashca has shown, the modern labor movement in 1930s Ecuador rejected traditional forms of paternalism in worker-employer relations.² This challenge included not only urban workers but also indigenous laborers on rural estates. Similarly, Guillermo Bustos indicated that by 1938 labor organizers' definition of the worker was expansive enough to (partially) include women and Indigenous peoples.³ Ecuadorian labor leaders' willingness to incorporate rural indigenous workers

1. I would like to thank Kim Clark, Mrinalini Sinha, and the anonymous reviewers for *The Americas*, whose comments helped me to improve this article. Some of the research for this article was conducted with the help of a Bridgewater State University Faculty and Librarian Research Grant, and with funding from a Fulbright Research Award.

2. Juan Manguashca, "Las clases subalternas en los años treinta," *Revista Ecuatoriana de Historia* 3, no. 6 (Segundo Semestre 1989): 165–89.

3. Guillermo Bustos, "La identidad 'Clase Obrera' a Revisión: Una lectura, sobre las representaciones del congreso obrero de Ambato de 1938," *Procesos: Revista Ecuatoriana de Historia* (Quito) no. 2 (1992): 73.

resulted from the rise of indigenous activism on large estates, whereas the inclusion of women focused specifically on those who worked in factories or other places of public employment. The expanding definition of the worker intersected with several other forms of modernization in the 1930s; despite ongoing challenges to economic and political stability, industrialization and urbanization were underway, and a solid middle class was emerging. Politics too had modernized: Although liberal notions of citizenship upheld the state, by the 1930s, both socialist and communist parties had formed and were challenging the government. All these changes impacted the scope of the modern Ecuadorian labor movement.

Labor organizers who challenged paternalism, however, remained silent on domestic service even though it was a common form of labor among poor women. This absence is not entirely surprising. Anthropologist Eduardo Kingman Garcés discussed the home as an enclosed space in which domestic work reproduced patriarchal relations, noting that relationships of servitude and patronage in elite homes were among the last social relations to change in the process of modernization.⁴ Labor leaders and leftists often ignored domestic servants on the assumption that housework, whether paid or unpaid, was “women’s work” and therefore outside of the labor sector; it was inherently social rather than economic.⁵ Instead of questioning these assumptions, twentieth-century labor movements in Latin America sidelined domestic workers, reinforcing the idea that class struggle was inherently masculine.⁶ The absence of domestic servants from labor discourses has had significant repercussions in contemporary Ecuador. Sociologist Erynn Masi de Casanova’s work demonstrates that contemporary domestic workers struggle to improve

4. This is one of the reasons that Kingman refers to a process of “modernización tradicional” in Quito in the early twentieth century. See Eduardo Kingman Garcés, *La ciudad y los otros, Quito 1860-1940: Higiene, ornato y policía* (Quito: FLACSO/FONSAL/Universitate Rovira i Virgili, 2008), 44–49; also see 173, 238–56 for Kingman’s discussion of servitude. Elizabeth Quay Hutchinson notes a similar association of domestic work with the traditional household and subservience in *Workers Like All the Rest of Them: Domestic Service and the Rights of Labor in Twentieth-Century Chile* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 28, 39.

5. In part, the distinction between domestic work and other forms of labor resulted from elite discourses that claimed, misleadingly, that servants were like “family” rather than employees. See Lesley Gill, *Precarious Dependencies: Gender, Class, and Domestic Service in Bolivia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 123; and Grace Esther Young, “The Myth of Being ‘Like a Daughter,’” *Latin American Perspectives* 54, no. 3 (Summer 1987): 365–80. For more recent works on the struggle for rights in twenty-first century Latin America, see Merike Blofield, *Care Work and Class: Domestic Workers’ Struggle for Equal Rights in Latin America* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012); and Erynn Masi de Casanova, *Dust and Dignity: Domestic Employment in Contemporary Ecuador* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 2019).

6. The tendency of labor and Marxist leaders to view domestic work as outside of “labor” stretches beyond simply Ecuador and Latin America, and even some socialist feminists have reinforced the (false) division between reproductive work and productive work. See Eileen Boris, *Making the Woman Worker: Precarious Labor and the Fight for Global Standards, 1919-2019* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 7, 13–14. For discussion of the tensions within Marxism regarding domestic labor, see Anna Safuta, “Migrant Domestic Services and the Revival of Marxist Feminisms: Asking the Other ‘Other Question’ as a New Research Method,” *Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 22.

their work conditions because, unlike other workers, they experience feminized and personalized (as well as economic) forms of oppression. Moreover, they find it difficult to forge alliances with male-dominated labor unions.⁷

Ecuadorian labor historians have not closely considered domestic work in the history of the modern labor movement.⁸ The absence is striking because paternalism and servitude were central to a wide range of labor relations and discourses in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: although historians typically treat domestic servants and *conciertos* (debt peons on large estates) as separate groups, the dividing line between agricultural and domestic labor was not always clear in practice.⁹ Most *conciertos* and their wives had to take turns serving as *huasicamas* (household servants for hacienda owners).¹⁰ Moreover, nineteenth-century elites justified their power over both groups through familial discourses, and both types of workers employed discourses of paternalism in labor conflicts.¹¹ Paternalism and domesticity permeated artisan workshops as well, and early mutual aid societies were based on a long history of patriarchal hierarchy in which workers and apprentices were subject to the personal authority of the master craftsman. Apprentices often had to perform household chores such as fetching water, cooking, or even changing diapers in order that they “learned humility.”¹² All three groups were identified as child-like in their status and need for protection, regardless of whether they were minors.¹³ Given that servitude and paternalism were deeply embedded in

7. Masi de Casanova, *Dust and Dignity*. Masi de Casanova also notes that domestic workers have had difficulty forming alliances with middle-class feminists.

8. This absence has been felt throughout Latin American histories. Heidi Tinsman noted the paucity of historical work on Latin American domestic servants in “The Indispensable Services of Sisters: Considering Domestic Service in United States and Latin America,” *Journal of Women’s History* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 43.

9. For example, both domestic servants and *conciertos* might inherit from their employers, though domestic servants were more likely to inherit cash or gifts while *conciertos* were more likely to inherit land or animals. Cases involving inheritance include: Archivo Nacional de Historia/Cuenca (hereafter ANH/C): Notarias, Libro 570: March 23, 1831; February 1, 1851; December 2, 1850; December 21, 1850; April 10, 1849; February 6, 1851; Notarias Libro 575: February 26, 1870; and Archivo Nacional Historia/Quito (hereafter ANH/Q): Juzgados: Juzgado Civil Central, Caja 5: November 5, 1857.

10. This service could be on the estate itself or in the owner’s urban household. On a few occasions, I even found references to “servant-peons,” suggesting that indebtedness and servitude were sometimes so inter-related that they could not always be distinguished. Examples can be found in: ANH/Q: Juzgados: Juzgado Civil Central, Caja 2: May 12, 1852; December 12, 1851; Caja 9: June 12, 1866; ANH/C: Juicios: December 2, 1889. It is not clear to me what, if any, specific connotation this term had.

11. Examples of *conciertos* calling upon paternalism in cases against employers include: ANH/Q: Indígenas: January 20, 1803; 1816; March 12, 1818; February 28, 1821; December 13, 1821; June 30, 1849. A wetnurse complained of mistreatment in ANH/C: Juicios: August 19, 1870. Because domestic servants were often minors, it was sometimes their parents who brought cases to court on their behalf, such as in: ANH/C: Juicios: July 6, 1872; April 19, 1869; February 27, 1890. In these cases, parents complained of the cruel treatment their children received and simultaneously tried to re-assert their own parental authority.

12. Milton Luna Tamayo, *Historia y conciencia popular: El artesanado en Quito, economía, organización y vida cotidiana, 1890-1930* (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional, 1989), 20–24 (the quote is on 23).

13. Although state officials expressed concern over the child-like status of indigenous men in the nineteenth century, they did little to change the overall structure of labor paternalism, including on estates. For a discussion of debates over gender and interethnic paternalism in nineteenth-century Ecuador, see Erin E. O’Connor, *Gender, Indian,*

labor relations, why is it that indigenous and labor activists' challenges to paternalism have produced historical curiosity, but not the absence of domestic workers in these processes?

I approach the silence on domestic workers as neither natural nor incidental, but as a problem that can reveal new dimensions of Ecuadorian labor history. My work builds upon the scholarship and activism on domestic workers that links the economic and the personal, the public and the private. Rubbo and Taussig noted that domestic service “reproduce[es] some of the basic patterns of oppression that make societies what they are today,” while Brazilian activist Lenira Carvalho proclaimed that “The one who brings the class struggle into the house is the domestic worker.”¹⁴ In recent years, scholars have brought attention to domestic labor as “both a distinct area of inquiry and as a field with links to labor, economic, family, cultural, women’s, gender, and political history.”¹⁵ Elizabeth Quay Hutchinson’s recent monograph on Chilean domestic workers has been a particularly important contribution that highlights domestic workers’ views and methods of organization.¹⁶ Whereas Hutchinson’s work focuses on making domestic workers visible in labor history, I am interested in historicizing the attempts to render domestic workers invisible.

To explore the relationship between labor history and domestic work in Ecuador, I reviewed existing labor histories, legal documents, social work records, and publications by labor organizations or political parties. I seek not to understand what life was like for domestic servants, but to explore the contours and

Nation: The Contradictions of Making Ecuador, 1830-1925 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007). For a discussion of debates over *conciertos* in the nineteenth century, see Derek Williams, “Popular Liberalism and Indian Servitude: The Making and Unmaking of Ecuador’s Antilandlord State, 1845-1868,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 83, no. 4 (November, 2003): 697–733.

14. Anna Rubbo and Michael Taussig, “Up off Their Knees: Servanthood in Southwest Colombia,” *Latin American Perspectives* 10, no. 1 (Autumn 1983): 5–6, 12; Lenira Carvalho is quoted in Joaze Bernardino-Costa, “Destabilizing the National Hegemonic Narrative: The Decolonized Thoughts of Brazil’s Domestic Workers’ Unions,” trans. Paulo Simões, *Latin American Perspectives* 38, no. 5 (September 2011): 39. Sociologist Anna Safuta’s study of migrant domestic workers similarly indicates that women’s subordination was built into the political economy of capitalist society. See Safuta, “Migrant Domestic Services,” 20. Nara Milanich’s work on Chile adds another layer with her observation that “domestic labor was so deeply associated with social subordination as to become institutional shorthand for it.” See Milanich, “Women, Children, and the Social Organization of Domestic Labor in Chile,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 91, no. 11 (2011): 32–33.

15. The quote is from Jocelyn Olcott, “Introduction: Researching and Rethinking the Labors of Love,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 91, no. 1 (February 2011): 3. This introduction was part of a special issue on reproductive labor. Essays there include Milanich, “Women, Children, and the Social Organization of Domestic Labor”; Rebekah E. Pite, “Entertaining Inequalities: Doña Petrona, Juanita Bordoy, and Domestic Work in Mid-Twentieth-Century Argentina,” 96–128; Elizabeth Quay Hutchinson, “Shifting Solidarities: The Politics of Household Workers in Cold War Chile,” 129–62. Ann Blum’s research on households and work in Mexico was critically important to our understanding of domestic work, including her article “Cleaning the Revolutionary Household: Domestic Servants and Public Welfare in Mexico City, 1900-1935,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 67–90.

16. Hutchinson, *Workers Like All the Rest of Them*.

contradictions in the relationships between workers, labor organizers, and the state in a critical period of economic, social, and political change. I argue that the marginalization of domestic servants defined and reinforced specific forms of masculine dignity and modernity as the core of worker identity. Domestic servants belonged symbolically to the realm of traditional labor, and their ties to the home placed them beyond the paradigm of class exploitation that concerned labor and leftist leaders.¹⁷ Therefore, unlike Kingman, I approach the domestic sphere not as a closed space, but as a point where the tensions of modernization played out in Ecuador.

LABOR ORGANIZATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF A WORKER IDENTITY

Ecuadorian labor movements began with artisan-based mutual-aid societies in the late nineteenth century. Though not entirely unconcerned with workers' wellbeing, these organizations were focused primarily on encouraging morality, brotherhood, and a "spirit of family" among workers. Within this general structure, Quito organizations tended to be more conservative, while Guayaquil societies began to emphasize workers' rights in the early twentieth century.¹⁸ Early labor congresses reflected this division: the 1909 Quito conference emphasized hierarchical labor obligations, while the 1920 Guayaquil meeting emphasized workers' rights.¹⁹

Even liberal labor organizers were ambivalent about whether women and Indigenous peoples could be included as workers. At the 1920 labor congress, Agustín Freyre proposed minimum wages in agriculture, but delegates contended that indigenous agricultural workers first needed to be redeemed (i.e., civilized) via primary education.²⁰ Women were similarly marginalized at the 1920 labor congress: two women attended the meeting, but they were not

17. Thanks to Mrinalini Sinha for this insight. A similar dynamic emerged with race in Peruvian labor policy. See Paulo Drinot, *The Allure of Labor: Workers, Race, and the Making of the Peruvian State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

18. During the Liberal period (1895–1925), state rhetoric encouraged labor organization and provided some new safety nets for the working poor; however, the state also became a regulating (and punitive) presence among the poor as well, and poor women were often blamed for breaches of cleanliness or morality among poor urban families. At the same time, Catholic labor organizations also proliferated based on encouragement from Pope Leo XIII via *Rerum Novarum* (1891). For discussions of these labor movements during the liberal period, see: Patricio Ycaza, *Historia del movimiento obrero ecuatoriano: De sus genesis al Frente Popular*, Segunda Edición (Quito: CEDIME, 1984); Isabel Robalino Bolle, *El sindicalismo en el Ecuador*, Segunda Edición (Quito: INEDES/CONUEP/PUCE, 1992); Richard Milk, *Movimiento obrero ecuatoriano: El desafío de la integración* (Quito: Abya Yala, 1997).

19. "El II Congreso Nacional," in *Pensamiento popular ecuatoriano*, comp. Jaime Durán Barba (Quito: Banco Central Ecuatoriana, 1981), 210–11; 225–28. The 1920 emphasis on workers' rights was bolstered by the 1916 passage of a law mandating an eight-hour workday, a six-day work week, overtime pay, and thirty-day notice for all employee terminations.

20. "El II Congreso Nacional," 213–14, 232, 234, 312, 384–85.

allowed to vote on proposals because they were from the Centro Feminista “La Aurora” rather than workers.²¹ Delegates in 1920 seemed torn over how to discuss gender and worker identity. Señor Váscones proclaimed that “The modern woman. . .has sufficiently proved that she is capable of working just like man.”²² Señor Drouet, however, claimed that men found fulfillment and dignity in work, while women did so through their noble mission as mothers.²³ By the time of the 1938 labor congress, there were a few indigenous and women representatives, and the definition of the worker was changing from the artisan model toward factory wage work. Importantly, the modern worker identity expanded to include indigenous estate workers.²⁴ This shift resulted from several changes that occurred after 1920, including the rise of indigenous activism, the establishment of the Ecuadorian socialist and communist parties, and the development of a more sophisticated social welfare system following the *Revolución Juliana* in 1925.²⁵ Industrialization likewise played a crucial role, especially in the aftermath of factory strikes in the mid-1930s.²⁶

Women accounted for a considerable minority of early industrial workers, especially in textile production.²⁷ Factory owners expected women workers to be docile and paid them less than men assuming that women’s work was supplemental to household income. Both assumptions were wrong: women workers’ incomes were crucial to family subsistence, and women proved willing to agitate for better pay and treatment. In 1934, women workers made up the majority of the 350 strikers at the “La Industrial” textile factory in Quito, where three out of the eight leaders were women.²⁸ Sometimes workers’

21. “El II Congreso Nacional,” 249–54, particularly 250–53. Eileen Boris noted similar dynamics at the International Labour Conference of 1919 in *Making the Woman Worker*, 18.

22. “El II Congreso Nacional,” 310.

23. “El II Congreso Nacional,” 274.

24. Bustos, “La identidad ‘clase obrera’ a revision,” 94–99.

25. The *Revolución Juliana* (July Revolution) occurred when a group of young army officers overthrew the Ecuadorian government on July 9, 1925. They promised to modernize the state, reform the economy, and work on behalf of ordinary people. Rather than rule directly, they handed over power to Isidro Ayora, a medical doctor who served as provisional president until he was overthrown in 1931. It was under this government that social welfare and public health services expanded. See Juan J. Paz y Miño Cepeda, “La revolución juliana y el gobierno de Isidro Ayora,” in *Revolución Juliana y salud colectiva*, ed. Germán Rodas Chaves (Quito: Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar/Corporación Editora Nacional, 2012), 79–106.

26. There were five strikes between 1933–1934, most of them in highland textile factories with large percentages of women workers. For more information, see Milk, *El movimiento obrero*, 110–25; Robert J. Alexander, *A History of Organized Labor in Peru and Ecuador* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007); Alexi Páez Cordero, “El movimiento obrero ecuatoriano en el período (1925-1960),” in *Nueva historia del Ecuador; Volumen 10: Época republicana IV*, ed. Enrique Ayala Mora (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional, 1990), 123–62; Robalino Bolle, *El sindicalismo en el Ecuador*, 109–15.

27. Women accounted for about one third of textile factory workers. See Richard Milk, *Movimiento obrero ecuatoriano: El desafío de la integración* (Quito: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador/Abya Yala, 1997), 113.

28. Patricio Ycaza, *Historia del movimiento obrero ecuatoriano: De su genesis al Frente Popular*, Segunda Edición (Quito: CEDIME, 1984), 258 (footnote 135), 232; see also Milk, *Movimiento obrero*, 114.

petitions specifically recognized women workers: for example, workers at “La Industrial Algodonera” in Ambato sought better pay and treatment as well as protections for women.²⁹ Workers at “La Internacional” in Quito even demanded equal pay for women.³⁰ Women’s inclusion at the 1938 congress thus resulted not from labor leaders’ enlightenment but from women workers’ actions and demands.

The 1938 Labor Code reflected changes in the labor force since the 1920s.³¹ The code upheld all previous labor legislation, including the right to an eight-hour workday and a six-day work week, accident compensation, the rights to organize and strike, and protective restrictions on female and child labor.³² The new code also made assumptions that identified the worker as male. For example, it stipulated that “minimum salary wages should be enough to satisfy the normal needs of the worker’s life considering him as head of the family.”³³ This article, combined with laws regulating female labor and prohibiting night work for women, suggested that the worker was male and reinforced his status as the head of household. Historian Eileen Boris noted that although protective laws appeared to pertain to work, they had more to do with male concerns about upholding gendered family norms and morality that constrained women without limiting working men. In fact, banning women from night work could allow them more time to labor at home for their families.³⁴ Women were similarly sidelined in the development of indigenous labor rights.

INDIGENOUS WORKERS, GENDER, AND RIGHTS

Early foundations for Ecuadorian indigenous movements can be found in liberal policies from 1895–1918. Although liberals upheld the equality and individual rights of all citizens, they reinforced interethnic paternalism by classifying Indigenous peoples as miserable and in need of protections, especially from large estate owners and priests.³⁵ However, the 1918 abolition of *concertaje*

29. This was in addition to demands for improved treatment and wages for all workers. Milk, *Movimiento obrero*, 118–20. Romo Leroux, *Movimiento de las mujeres*, also includes an overview of these strikes, placing them within the broader women’s movements of the period, on 151–52.

30. Ycaza, *Historia del movimiento obrero*, 231–32. The Comité Regional del Partido Comunista Ecuatoriano (the Regional Committee of the Ecuadorian Communist Party) also protested the forcible eviction of some of the women strikers, who were hurt in the process, noting that soldiers and police officials attacked them when they were unarmed. See Ycaza, 257, footnote 131, for their complaint.

31. Páez Cordero, “El movimiento obrero,” 130.

32. República del Ecuador, *Código del Trabajo 1938* (Quito: Imprenta del Ministerio de Gobierno, 1939), Título I, Capítulo V, “Sueldos y Salarios,” Art. 57, page 15. This code also called for the establishment of minimum wages to be determined by commissions in each province.

33. *Código del Trabajo 1938*, Título I, Capítulo V, “Salarios y Sueldos,” Art. 58, 1o, page 16.

34. Boris, *Making the Woman Worker*, 18–19, 26, 38–39.

35. For examples of such proclamations, see: Juan Freile-Granizo, ed. “Leyes Indigenistas: Compilación,” *Sarance* no. 19 (Instituto Otavaleño de Antropología, August 1994): 104–14; 134; 163–64. State-sanctioned interethnic

(debt peonage) only eliminated imprisonment for debt rather than restructuring labor on large estates.³⁶ Other important laws were the 1904 *Ley de Cultas*, which confiscated Church-owned lands, and the 1908 *Ley de Beneficencia*, which created welfare boards to administer state-owned properties, including oversight of relations between indigenous workers and elite renters.³⁷ Although these laws fell short of liberating Indigenous peoples, they provided estate workers with new tools for addressing labor conditions.

Collective action, once rare among hacienda workers, became more common in the liberal period.³⁸ Beginning in the 1910s, indigenous workers on state-owned haciendas in Ecuador's north-central highlands drew on liberal laws and rhetoric to lodge complaints against the elite renters of estates.³⁹ An important turning point came in the 1920s, when indigenous activists forged relationships with leftist leaders. Though this relationship was at first fraught with interethnic paternalism, over time leftist leaders—especially communist Ricardo Paredes—held indigenous activists in high regard and forged horizontal relationships with them.⁴⁰ By the 1930s, estate workers presented their demands in terms of labor rights.⁴¹ They appealed to state officials for equal rights as citizens while simultaneously demanding protection as exploited peoples of a miserable race. In essence, indigenous activists used the inherent contradictions of liberal laws to their own advantage.

A critical moment in the history of hacienda worker protests came in December 1930, when workers on the Pesillo hacienda in Cayambe (Pichincha province) went on strike to demand improved working conditions and pay. Strikers made seventeen central demands, including the abolition of cruel punishments, the elimination of unpaid labor, a five-day work week for *huasipungueros* (indebted workers who had access to small plots of land) with a 40-centavo wage for each

paternalism continued beyond the liberal period. For an example, see Archivo del Museo Nacional de Medicina, Junta Central de Asistencia Pública (MNM/JCAP; hereafter JCAP): Comunicaciones Recibidas: 1931, part 1, 590.

36. For a comprehensive overview of Ecuador's liberal period, see Enrique Ayala Mora, *Historia de la revolución liberal ecuatoriana* (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional, 1994). For a discussion of gender and the abolition of concertaje, see O'Connor, *Gender, Indian, Nation*, chapter 4.

37. Marc Becker, *Indians and Leftists in the Making of Ecuador's Modern Indigenous Movements* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 9. For gender issues with these changes, see O'Connor, *Gender, Indian, Nation*, chapter 4.

38. O'Connor, *Gender, Indian Nation*, 170–81.

39. For examples, see JCAP: Comunicaciones Recibidas: 1913, 297; and 1914, 407, 419–20, and 477–78.

40. Early paternalism can be found in “Programa de Acción del Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano,” in *Labores de la Asamblea Nacional Socialista y Manifiesto del Congreso central del partido* (Guayquil: Imp. “El Tiempo,” 1926), 13. For the eventual horizontal ties between leftists and indigenous activists in Ecuador, see Becker, *Indians and Leftists*, and Ricardo Paredes, “El movimiento obrero en el Ecuador,” originally printed in *La Internacional Sindical Roja* 1 (August 1928): 76–81, and transcribed on a website by Marc Becker: <https://www.yachana.org/archivo/comunismo/paredes-isr-agosto28.php> (last accessed October 2023).

41. Becker notes, for example, that indigenous organizations often referred to the new labor code after 1938; see his *Indians and Leftists*, 73–75.

day's work, an eight-hour workday, the establishment of a school on the hacienda, and free medical care for sick workers.⁴² Two of their demands related directly to women: first, strikers requested that "Milkmaids who work from early in the morning will earn twenty centavos every day, and after finishing their milking and cheese making chores will be free, without obligation to do other jobs." Second, they insisted that "Women employed in labors less difficult than the men shall earn thirty centavos a day."⁴³ On the one hand, the strikers—many of whom were women themselves—were fighting against hacienda practices in which huasipungueros' wives were forced to work for little or no pay. On the other hand, the demands implied that women's labor was less valuable than men's.⁴⁴ Petitions on other state-owned haciendas contained a similar tension over women's status as workers, particularly when men complained that women's obligations on the hacienda forced them to neglect their responsibilities toward their husbands and homes.⁴⁵ Protestors on the Moyurco hacienda even asserted that managers should not make women work five days per week because "Indian women's work is occasional and one should not think of it as constant."⁴⁶

Domestic service turns (as huasicamas) were an especially sensitive issue for indigenous protestors. Although male estate workers agreed to take turns working in the hacienda house with their wives, they maintained that the work had to be remunerated and flatly refused to provide domestic service in managers' or overseers' houses. Some laborers opposed women's service for estate renters more generally: In 1945, huasipunguero Miguel Alba lodged a complaint with the Public Welfare director claiming that his wife was wrongfully being forced to provide huasicama services.⁴⁷

Indigenous labor activism on large estates had a clear impact on the 1938 labor code, in which *jornaleros* (day laborers) were guaranteed the legal minimum wage, with no more than 25 percent of their wages being deducted for any food provided. Huasipungueros could not be paid less than half of a jornalero's daily wages, nor could they be forced to work more than four days per week. They were further guaranteed the right to hunt and fish on estate property, and they could not be forced to sell their own animals or tend to the employer's

42. An English translation of this petition can be found at Marc Becker's website: www.yachana.org/carchivo/pesillo1931.php. The original Spanish petition is from the Quito newspaper *El Día*, January 6, 1931.

43. *El Día*, January 6, 1931.

44. Eileen Boris asserted that "comparable worth" references to work completed were often used to keep women's pay lower. See *Making the Woman Worker*, 58.

45. JCAP: Comunicaciones Recibidas: 1931, 631–32v. A specific complaint was that wives were not available to serve food to husbands working in the fields.

46. JCAP: Comunicaciones Recibidas: 1931, 776.

47. JCAP: Comunicaciones Recibidas: 1945, 1163.

animals without compensation.⁴⁸ The code set specific requirements and limits to domestic labor on haciendas:

When a peón provides domestic services as a huasicama. . . he, his wife, and children will be entitled, in cases where they accompany him in the service, to the cost of moving, food and housing, and the peón will receive monetary wages corresponding to every day of domestic work provided. Any of the peón's family members over 12 years of age, who provide the indicated services, will receive separate wages.⁴⁹

In effect, the 1938 labor code addressed many demands that indigenous activists made in their conflicts with hacienda owners. Although estate workers could legally be paid lower wages than other workers, they also worked fewer hours and enjoyed access to estate resources. As with other sections of the labor code, the indigenous worker was gendered male, and work performed by his family members was deemed supplemental. This classification was simultaneously traditional and modern: it rested on centuries-old practices of referencing only male workers in hacienda record books, but it also reflected an essentially masculine definition of the modern worker. Indigenous activists' concern with huasicama requirements is not surprising when one considers that these duties were among the most difficult to align with a worker identity that was free from associations with servitude and interethnic paternalism. Indigenous activists' successful challenge to huasicama practices suggests that when domestic servants were male, they were more likely to gain rights and pay than in circumstances when domestic servants were predominantly female.⁵⁰

The gradual change in labor leaders' views of indigenous workers is evident in the Guayquil labor magazine *La Aurora*. Articles rarely mentioned indigenous workers the 1910s, and any references to them reinforced dominant racial discourses that identified Indians as miserable peoples in need of redemption and civilization.⁵¹ By the 1920s, columns in *La Aurora* occasionally recognized the indigenous workers' problems as a matter of concern for workers'

48. República del Ecuador, *Código del Trabajo 1938*, (Quito: Imprenta del Ministerio de Gobierno, 1939), "Parágrafo II: De los Jornaleros, Huasipungueros, Destajeros y Yanaperos," 58–62.

49. *Código del Trabajo 1938*, "Parágrafo II: De los Jornaleros, Huasipungueros, Destajeros y Yanaperos," Art. 252, 58–59.

50. Elizabeth Quay Hutchinson noted a similar pattern in Chile, in which the 1926 union of male and female domestic workers was able to garner the attention of the minister of labor and affiliate with some of the national labor unions. See Hutchinson, *Workers Like All the Rest of Them*, 38, 44–45.

51. Some examples are: "Por un pueblo," *La Aurora*, Año I, Num. 7: Octubre de 1916, 113; L.F. Borja (hijo), "Las necesidades del obrero," *La Aurora*, Año I, Num. 8: Noviembre de 1916, 121–24; "Conferencia," *La Aurora*, Año II, Num. 20: Diciembre de 1917, 384–85. As noted previously, such views were also apparent in the 1920 Labor Congress.

movements.⁵² In 1940, Julio Senador Gómez wrote a column claiming that elites had unjustly wrested land from many rural communities.⁵³ However, in that same year, Gilberto Clarijo y Guerrero insisted that rural workers required civic education before being incorporated on equal footing, so that they would avoid becoming “unthinking instruments of audacious people.”⁵⁴ Similarly, the Ambato Labor Congress of 1938 was the first to include indigenous representatives, but there were only three indigenous delegates even though Indigenous peoples accounted for a significant percentage of the nation’s workers. Some non-indigenous delegates also perpetuated stereotypes of Indigenous peoples as defenseless and vulnerable to manipulation.⁵⁵

Despite the strong association of hacienda work with men, indigenous women were actively involved in conflicts with hacienda renters. About one-third of the 1931 Pesillo protestors were women, and some indigenous women (most notably Dolores Cacuango and Tránsito Amaguaña) emerged as important activist leaders. Both women were involved in the 1931 strike, both had ties with the Ecuadorian Communist Party, and both helped to found the Federation of Ecuadorian Indians in 1944. Yet neither Cacuango nor Amaguaña focused on women’s rights per se, choosing instead to concentrate on concerns that they shared with indigenous men. Although Cacuango and Amaguaña opened possibilities for other indigenous women’s political activism, it remained difficult for indigenous women to address gender inequalities.⁵⁶

DOMESTIC SERVANTS: EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE

Domestic service was a constant in the history of Ecuadorian labor and key factor in urban growth in the early- to mid-twentieth century. By the mid-twentieth century, most domestic servants were young women who had migrated from the countryside, and not all of them lived in the households where they

52. “Proyecto de ley sobre subsistencia,” *La Aurora*, Año XI, Num 122: Noviembre de 1926, 2024; Roberto González Ruíz Díaz, “El Patriotismo,” *La Aurora*, Año XIX, Num 197: Agosto de 1934, 3274. Though these pieces usually avoided direct reference to race, they hinted at it when they asserted that urban and rural workers shared common problems and causes.

53. Julio Senador Gómez, “La propiedad legítima,” *La Aurora*, Año XXIV, Num. 260: Octubre de 1940, 4784.

54. Gilberto Clarijo y Guerrero, “Por los campesinos,” *La Aurora*, Año XXIV, Nums. 253, 254, 255: Marzo, Abril, y Mayo de 1940, 4697–98. – The “audacious” people referenced were probably either tinterillos (rural lawyers) or communist leaders, who were often charged with agitating otherwise docile Indigenous peoples—despite evidence of indigenous grassroots activism and agency.

55. Bustos, “La identidad ‘Clase Obrera,’” 97–98.

56. For biographies of Cacuango and Amaguaña, see Raquel Rodas Morales, *Dolores Cacuango: Gran líder del pueblo indio* (Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, 2005), and Cecilia Miño Grijalva, *Tránsito Amaguaña: Heroína india* (Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador/Oxfam America, 2006). In addition to any concerns these activists might have had about discussing their experiences as women, the leftist leaders with whom they worked did not make it easy to address gender, as will be discussed in the next section.

worked.⁵⁷ The expansion of state bureaucracies, public schools and services, and industrialization led to the growth of middle classes by the 1930s, and most of these families hired at least one or two domestic servants. In fact, middle-class women were only able to take advantage of new opportunities in the public sphere because they had access to readily available and affordable domestic help.⁵⁸

The 1906 police code offers clues about how state officials sought to maintain control of so-called servile classes in early stages of modernization. Police had the right to regulate the lives of the poor, presuming them to be inclined toward drunkenness, vagrancy, and disorder. Like other poor urban workers, domestic workers (laundresses, cooks, wetnurses, etc.) had to register with the local police, and those who worked for more than three months were supposed to obtain documentation from a local judge.⁵⁹ Though the police could ostensibly protect the rights of workers as well as employers, the code only referred to contracts as a means to capture minors or domestic servants who fled their employers or guardians.⁶⁰

One of the reasons that domestic servants were seen as a class apart, rather than as part of the working class, was that most of them were female and many were minors. Police and government officials facilitated adoptions in which elites brought children into their homes with the specific purpose of using them as domestic laborers. Public Assistance records from 1900–1945 offer evidence of elites who went to orphanages to adopt children, some of them as young as four or five years old.⁶¹ Orphanages trained girls for work in domestic service, both to help the girls find work and to address what elites saw as “the deteriorating quality of domestic service.”⁶² Though few elites specified that they would put adopted children to work, a case from 1910 makes clear that elites viewed these children as servants, not family members. Angel Porras

57. For the pattern of young female migration, see J.V.D. Saunders, *The People of Ecuador: A Demographic Analysis* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1961), 27–28. Paulo Drinot, *The Allure of Labor*, 81, similarly noted that most women in urban areas of Peru worked as domestic servants.

58. Ana María Goetschel, *Educación de las mujeres, maestras y esferas públicas: Quito en la primera mitad del siglo XX* (Quito: FLACSO/Abya-Yala, 2007), 253 and footnote 9 on 289. Hutchinson noted a similar trend in Chile in *Workers Like All the Rest of Them*, 7; and Boris noted a rising global pattern by the 1950s in *Making the Woman Worker*, 77.

59. República del Ecuador, *Código Policía* (Quito: Imprenta Nacional, 1906), 26–36, especially Art. 67 on page 28. Hutchinson makes a similar point about Chilean middle classes and work in *Workers Like All the Rest of Them*, 7.

60. *Código Policía*, Arts. 87, 88, and 95, pages 30–32. Domestic servants also came to the attention of public health officials at times when their employers suspected them of prostitution, as noted in A. Kim Clark, *Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador: Modernizing Women, Modernizing the State, 1895–1950* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 89, 99–100.

61. For example, see JCAP: Comunicación Recibida: 1945 pt 2, 1388, 1393, 1394; and JCAP: Comunicación Recibida: 1931, 498, 548–49.

62. Clark, *Gender, State, and Medicine*, 37–39. Clark mentions that most of these placements were ad hoc in the first years of the twentieth century, without consultation of any living family members (many children deemed orphans had one living parent or other family members too poor to raise them). More formal contracts became the norm by about 1920.

complained to the president of the Social Welfare Board that the Mother Superior in charge of an orphanage had refused to let him take home two girls, claiming that none were available.⁶³ Irate, Porras asserted that no one should stop a civilized man from helping the nation out by feeding and educating orphan girls.⁶⁴ Porras, like other elites, saw this arrangement as work for care, rather than work for pay.⁶⁵ Girls as young as two and a half or three years old were adopted out to elite families, with any actual payment for their services delayed until they were of age.⁶⁶ As the twentieth century wore on, it appears that fewer children entered domestic service through adoption, and by the 1940s, couples adopting children had to promise that they would treat them as legitimate heirs with full inheritance rights.⁶⁷

Child labor, however, was prominent in domestic service well into the twentieth century. Article 83 of the 1938 labor code stated that “Minors under the age of 14 are prohibited from doing any kind of work, *with the exception of the provisions in the Domestic Service Chapter* [of the labor code].”⁶⁸ It further stipulated that employers of domestic servants under age twelve did not have to pay them wages but instead had to provide them with food, shelter, and education.⁶⁹ Social workers often facilitated the placement of poor children into service in elite households. For example, when the widow Blanca Guerra Gavila asked to have her daughter placed in an orphanage because she was too old for state-run daycare, social service workers rejected her request.⁷⁰ They explained that “The Secretary of the Council thinks that the girl is not eligible for the orphanage, because she has a mother and is of an age where she could render her services in someone’s home and study at a night school.”⁷¹ The girl was eight years old.

63. The Junta de Beneficencia, or Social Welfare Board, was established in 1896 under liberal rule. It took time for the systems of social welfare to come fully under the state, as noted here with an orphanage run by nuns. However, the state oversaw private assistance and by the 1930s a state-run social welfare system had taken shape, culminating with the establishment of a school for social workers in the late 1930s. See Clark, *Gender, State, and Medicine*, 34–36.

64. JCAP: Comunicaciones Recibidas: 1910, 243. The Mother Superior of the orphanage was not necessarily trying to protect girls from exploitation; Clark notes that child labor was often used in Ecuadorian orphanages in the 1910s. See *Gender, State, and Medicine*, 38–39.

65. See Esben Liefesen, “Moralities and Politics of Belonging: Governing female reproduction in 20th century Quito,” PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2006, 181–83, for his discussion of elites taking in children as domestic servants.

66. Clark, *Gender, State, and Medicine*, 40–41.

67. Clark, *Gender, State, and Medicine*, 41. For an example of an adoption aimed at integrating a child into the family, see JCAP: Comunicación Recibida: 1941, 284–86.

68. *Código del Trabajo 1938*, 22, emphasis mine. The same stipulation was made in the 1954 labor code, which was mainly an updated version of the previous code. See Luis Jaramillo Pérez, *Código del Trabajo y principales referencias* (Quito: Imp. de la Universidad, 1954), 41.

69. *Código del Trabajo 1938*, Arts. 175, 178–80, pages 44–46. Article 175 references “primary education” as a patrono’s responsibility toward domestic servants, but it is unclear that elites changed the practice of simply “educating” children for life-long domestic servitude.

70. State-run daycare centers provided care, food, and (when necessary) medical treatment for children of working mothers up to seven years old. See JCAP: Comunicación Recibidas: 1935, part 2, 767.

71. JCAP: Revisión de la documentación de Servicio Social desde 1947, “Gavila, Maruja.”

Children working in elite homes had no guarantee of security or stability. In 1947, Zoila Rendón de Mosquera went to the social services office to have her eight-year-old servant, Beatriz Georgina Sánchez, put into an orphanage. Rendón claimed that although she had raised the *longuita*—a derogatory reference to the girl's indigenous ancestry—and treated her like family, she could no longer keep her in the household. The girl, she said, stole household items and sold them, spent time on the street rather than going to school, and fought so much with the cooks that they could no longer tolerate her. Only Sr. Mosquera defended the child, stating that his wife and children often punished the girl too harshly, while he claimed to look upon her with paternal caring. Social Services placed Sánchez in an orphanage.⁷² The case highlights both the plight of child workers in elite homes and the racism that frequently underscored domestic labor. It further confirms that children under twelve worked as servants in private households well into the 1940s, despite rising political concern with the practice.⁷³

Information from the 1938 labor code highlights domestic servants' limited ability to call upon rights or protections as workers. Some differences were explicit—whereas the labor code guaranteed Saturday afternoon as well as Sunday off for most workers, domestic workers only had the right to one day off per week.⁷⁴ Other rights were not specifically denied to domestic servants but were unenforceable, such as an eight-hour workday, regular breaks during the workday, the right to time off on national holidays, and women and children's protection from night labor.⁷⁵ Embedded within the labor code is a key to understanding implicit distinctions between domestic servants and other workers: the phrase “in all work establishments.”⁷⁶ The code presumed that work was public in nature, whereas domestic labor was private, indicating a hardening of the division between home and work in official discourses by the 1930s.⁷⁷ It was for this reason that wet nurses, cooks, and others “who provide their services in hotels, bars, inns, hospitals or similar establishments are not [considered] domestics, but as workers subject to the general rules of this Code.”⁷⁸

72. JCAP: Revisión de la documentación de Servicio Social desde 1947, “Sanchez, Georgina.” Señor Mosquera's comment reinforced the stereotype of the *patrona* as the main villain with regard to domestic labor, though the reality was more complex. This case is especially intriguing because Rendón de Mosquera was a well-known maternalist feminist.

73. Ecuador's 1945 constitution forbade domestic service for children under twelve—see Clark, *Gender, State, and Medicine*, 41. However, that constitution was replaced just a year later.

74. *Código del Trabajo 1938*, Art. 65, p. 17, and Art. 176, page 45.

75. *Código del Trabajo 1938*, Arts. 63, 68, 69, 80, 86, pages 17–18, 21–22; Hutchinson noted a similar problem in Chile with the 1931 Labor Code; see *Workers Like All the Rest of Them*, 38–39.

76. *Código del Trabajo 1938*, see Art. 81, page 21.

77. One can find similar distinctions in Peru and Chile. See Drinot, *The Allure of Labor*, 32, and Hutchinson, *Workers Like All the Rest of Them*, 27.

78. *Código del Trabajo 1938*, Art. 169, page 43. In an interesting twist on this, anthropologist Kim Clark observed that nursing students struggled to be treated as professionals and were often given servants' work or treated as if they were servants. See *Gender, State, and Medicine*, 145–46, 163–66.

Although laws identified domestic servants with the private sphere of the families they served, domestic workers' own family lives were often in disarray. Daycare centers were first established in Quito during the 1910s for children whose mothers were "poor and honorable" servants, many of whom previously had no choice but to separate from their children.⁷⁹ Decades later, domestic servants still could not have their children with them at work and struggled to find care for them. Several women who sought social service assistance in 1947 petitioned to have their children placed in daycare centers, deposited in orphanages, or provided with scholarships to go to state-run schools.⁸⁰ Gaining access to state support, however, did not necessarily solve domestic servants' familial problems. Margarita Cachumba's children went to school or daycare while their mother worked for an elite family, but "her patrona is bothered by the trips she has to make to drop the children off in the morning. . . which makes her lose work time."⁸¹ Employers' convenience continued to prevail over domestic workers' family cohesion.

Domestic workers' difficulty obtaining rights resulted not just from elite and middle-class interest in maintaining access to cheap domestic labor, but also from labor organizations that ignored or obfuscated their experiences and needs. Only once did the labor monthly *La Aurora* address domestic workers, in a column titled "The Cook's Speech." Purportedly written by an anonymous member of a cook's union, the piece discussed elites' lack of appreciation for cooks ("all mouths open at mealtime, but they eat and shut; none opens to praise us as we deserve") and proclaimed an era of emancipation. The author demanded Sundays and holidays off; permission to let cooks' boyfriends visit them in the kitchen; and an end to the custom of having to account for all food purchases. If these demands were not met, cooks would engage in acts of sabotage with their employers' food and goods; the author even made passing mention to going on strike.⁸² "The Cook's Speech" appeared in the "*Sección Amena*" (Pleasant Section), suggesting that it was meant to be a light-hearted discussion of a cook's view of elite households. The playful language of the piece reinforced its humorous nature: the author referred to cooks as "tasty, exquisite, and succulent compañeras," and proclaimed they were "as indispensable as oil in mayonnaise" in the households where they served.⁸³ The

79. Clark, *Gender, State, and Medicine*, 48. Some mothers who left infants on the street provided notes explaining that they could not have their children with them in the homes of their elite employers.

80. JCAP: Revisión de la documentación de Servicio Social desde 1947, AP 1216. For examples, see "Echeverría, Gonzalo," "Gavela, Maruja," "Gordillo, hermanos," "Molina, María del Carmen," "Morales, Rosa Victoria," "Villacís, Juan Francisco y Eduardo."

81. JCAP: Comunicación Recibida: 1945, pt. 2, 1944.

82. "Discurso de una cocinera," *La Aurora*, Año XVI, Num. 180: Noviembre de 1932, 2995–96.

83. This might have been similar to the "Desideria" caricature that Hutchinson noted in early twentieth-century Chile as a "feisty, assertive, unrefined working-class woman." See Hutchinson, *Workers Like All the Rest of Them*, 42.

article sometimes discussed real problems that domestic servants faced, but its lighthearted tone, and the lack of any other columns on domestic work, indicate that the editors of *La Aurora* did not include domestic servants under the mantle of worker.

Women's marginalization in labor movements was a problem across the political spectrum. Although a 1934 Quito assembly of workers, leftists, and students called for regulations of domestic servants' work conditions, most labor and leftist leaders paid little attention to women workers and even less to domestics.⁸⁴ At first, leftist politics seemed concerned with gender inequalities: When the Partido Socialista Ecuatoriana was established in 1926, its members called for gender equality in the economy, politics, and society; they even critiqued inequalities in the family.⁸⁵ However, by the 1930s, it was rare for socialist or communist party leaders to mention women except to uphold indigenous strikers' demands or call for the enforcement of pre-existing protective labor laws. The 1932 Communist Party program did not even mention gender inequalities.⁸⁶ Leftist politicians' disinterest in women or domestic service was especially important because leftists exercised a strong influence on the 1938 labor code.⁸⁷ Domestic workers' marginalization thus resulted from labor leaders who identified workers as masculine, making an exception for women industrial workers only because of their association with the most modern and public forms of work and protest.⁸⁸

Occasionally, working-class feminists tried to help domestic workers. In 1920, women from the Centro Feminista "La Aurora" in Guayaquil championed the cause of Teodosia Lajes, an eight-year-old domestic worker who fled her employer's home. They sought custody of the child, whom they claimed had been cruelly punished, and wanted to provide training to help her to avoid a life of servitude. Much to their dismay, Lajes was instead handed over to the

84. The 1934 Quito assembly demands appear in Milk, *Movimiento obrero ecuatoriano*, 112. Some ordinary working-class men, especially in factories, rallied on behalf of working women's rights, but labor leaders do not appear to have done so.

85. Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano, *Labores de la Asamblea Nacional Socialista y Manifiesto del Consejo central del partido* (Guayaquil: Imp. "El Tiempo," 1926), 6, 10, 16, 28–29.

86. Ricardo Paredes, "Acerca de la nacionalidad y el estado ecuatoriano," and Pedro Saad, "La democracia proletaria," both in *Los comunistas en la historia nacional*, ed. Domingo Paredes (Guayaquil: Instituto de Investigaciones y Estudios Socioeconómicos del Ecuador/Editorial Claridad, 1987), 70 and 132, respectively. Upholding laws regarding maternity and child labor were also mentioned in Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano, *Estatutos, programas ideológico y acción inmediata del partido socialista ecuatoriana* (Ambato: Tip. "A.M. Garcés," 1933), 25. The 1932 program points appear in Domingo Paredes, "Introducción," in *Los comunistas en la historia nacional*, 16–17. The absence of gender inequality was particularly noteworthy given Ricardo Paredes's recognition that Indigenous peoples experienced the double burden of class and race oppression. For this, see Becker, *Indians and Leftists*, 33.

87. Milk, *Movimiento obrero ecuatoriano*, 143–44.

88. Such distinctions were world-wide in the early twentieth century. See Boris, *Making the Woman Worker*, 27–28.

police commissioner, who sent her to work in a new household.⁸⁹ Working-class women were powerless to change the girl's fate because neither elites nor police officials were concerned with child domestic labor. However, the center continued to offer classes to other young girls with the hope of helping them to avoid lifelong domestic service.

DOMESTIC SERVANTS WORKING WITHIN THE SYSTEM

Despite the limitations of the emerging welfare system, poor women learned which arguments were most likely to help them access assistance. When new educational institutions and scholarships became available in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, poor individuals—especially widows or abandoned mothers—wrote to the Social Welfare Board to try to get their children admitted into the schools.⁹⁰ Supplicants tried to convince government officials that they were members of the so-called “deserving poor,” who struggled due to circumstances beyond their control rather than because of their own moral failings. By the 1930s and 1940s, poor petitioners also played upon elite fears of juvenile delinquency. Mothers who brought cases before social workers often declared that without government assistance their children were destined to spend “all day in the street,” where they would learn bad habits and get into trouble.⁹¹ Their statements reflected elite presumptions that children without parental supervision would be

left to the disastrous influences of the street. They grow up in the stream of vice and carelessness. Hunger, necessity, and freedom fatally lead them to certain crimes: theft, aggressiveness, attacks on modesty. In abandonment they find the [slippery] slope that leads them to moral degradation and crime. The habit of laziness, lying, and disobedience is born in them. Abandonment is, therefore one of the social causes of delinquency.⁹²

Officials fearful of juvenile delinquency, and especially young girls' immorality, were more likely to aid poor mothers. Although social workers often blamed mothers (rather than poverty) for families' unhealthy living conditions, many did the best that they could to help their clients, who were often female domestic workers. When children were not eligible to go to a daycare or an orphanage, social workers sent women to other agencies for assistance or

89. “Por una menor,” *La Mujer Ecuatoriana*, Año I, Num. 4: Octubre de 1918, 90; “Al público,” and “Un voto de censura,” both in Año I, Num. 5: Noviembre de 1918, 101–02 and 116.

90. Clark, *Gender, State, and Medicine*, 44.

91. For some examples from 1947, see JCAP: Revisión de la documentación de Servicio Social desde 1947, “Echeverría, Gonzalo,” “Gavela, Maruja,” “Gordillo, hermanos,” “Villacís, Juan Francisco y Eduardo.”

92. Neptalí Zuñiga, *Los niños sin hogar* (Quito: Imp. de la Universidad Central, 1936), 127.

provided supplemental income for families. They also tried to get absent fathers to support the families that they abandoned.⁹³ It was for this reason that poor women, including domestic servants, sought state assistance despite its many limitations.

There is little evidence of collective organization among domestic workers in the early twentieth century, even among state-hired domestics. One reason for this was that most domestic workers were isolated from each other in the homes of elite families. It is therefore not surprising that one of the only groups of domestic workers to act collectively were washerwomen.⁹⁴ In 1919, a group of about twenty washerwomen in Quito petitioned the director of the subdivision of Public Health for the right to access water sources that a new city policy prohibited them from using.⁹⁵ Unlike other domestic workers, washerwomen interacted with each other on a daily basis at locations where they went to wash clothes, and most of them did not live with their employers. These details of daily existence allowed the women to work together to resolve their shared problem. I contend, however, that it was not simply their isolation from each other that made most domestic servants unlikely to develop stronger patterns of protest and negotiation. Instead, it resulted from intersecting and traceable processes of modernization: first, urbanization and middle-class women's entrance into the workforce required cheap domestic labor. Second, labor leaders, socialist leaders, and the state increasingly identified the worker as male and emphasized that work occurred outside of the home. Labor (and leftist) leaders challenged patriarchalism that indigenous estate workers experienced, but their silence on domestic work reinforced the paternalism under which domestic servants labored.

CONCLUSION

Ecuadorian domestic workers' marginalization in labor laws and movements was not unique, but it had lasting implications for both labor organization and domestic work in twentieth-century Ecuador. Labor discourses identifying work with a masculine public sphere made it difficult for domestic workers to

93. Liefesen, "Moralties and Politics of Belonging," notes that Ecuadorian social workers adopted a US model in which they were first supposed to try to improve families by educating mothers, keep families together whenever possible, and only make substitute family arrangements if the original family could not be preserved. In this way, Ecuadorian social workers were similar to those that historian Karin Roseblatt studied in twentieth-century Chile. See Karin Alejandra Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

94. For example, members of a washerwomen's union participated in the 1922 Guayaquil strike that proved to be a pivotal event in Ecuadorian labor history. See Romo Leroux G., *El movimiento de mujeres*, 136–37.

95. JCAP: Sanidad: Subdivisión de Sanidad, Comunicación Recibida: 1919, 317.

address the problems they faced.⁹⁶ Many domestic servants began working in elite and middle-class homes when they were girls, and even those who were adults were separated from each other and often from their own families. They also held contradictory roles vis-à-vis modernization: On the one hand, a supply of cheap domestic labor was necessary for urbanization, the expansion of the middle classes, and middle-class women's new professional opportunities. On the other hand, domestic workers symbolized a traditional, familial form of labor. This made them the concern of the emerging welfare system, not the labor movement.⁹⁷ Domestic workers' marginalized position not only gave coherence to the modern worker's identity, but it resolved tensions in the process of modernization and justified the inclusion of indigenous rural workers under the mantle of the modern worker.

By the 1930s, Ecuadorian modernization brought with it uncertainties and threats to long-standing hierarchies. The rise of socialist and communist parties influenced both workers' and indigenous movements. Labor organizations and indigenous activists rejected the paternalism that undergirded traditional labor relations, and indigenous workers confronted deeply embedded racism. Middle-class women entered the workforce as teachers, nurses, and social workers, while working-class women worked in factories. In 1929, literate women gained voting rights. These socio-economic and political changes all occurred during a decade of tremendous political upheaval.⁹⁸ Gender discourses were essential to easing male anxieties over the changes wrought by modernization.⁹⁹ These discourses identified the workplace as public and masculine, and the home as private and under male control. Women could be included as workers if they labored in the public sphere, but they were set apart, along with minors, via protective laws that disallowed them from

96. Among works to recognize the masculine history of labor organization are Drinot, *The Allure of Labor*; Thomas Miller Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904-1951* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); and Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950-1973* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

97. Drinot, *The Allure of Labor*, 214, makes a similar point based on the arguments of Linda Gordon that the welfare state considered women's needs, but men's rights. See Linda Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States, 1890-1935," *American Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (February 1992): 31-35.

98. There were seventeen different governments in Ecuador between 1931 and 1940, and in addition to the rise of leftist parties already noted, the 1930s saw the rise of conservative populism under José María Velasco Ibarra. For an overview of this period, see Agustín Cueva, "El Ecuador de 1925 a 1960," in *Nueva Historia del Ecuador; Volumen 10: Época Republicana IV*, ed. Enrique Ayala Mora (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional, 1990), 91-121.

99. A full discussion of gender discourses and modernization is beyond the scope of this essay, but I have written about them elsewhere. For a general overview of gender and modernization via the lens of motherhood, see Erin E. O'Connor, *Mothers Making Latin America: Gender, Households, and Politics since 1825* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 102-57. Regarding how gender discourses, especially domesticity, influenced debates over female suffrage in Ecuador, see "Without Consideration of Their Sex? The Uneven Path to Female Suffrage in Ecuador, ca. 1883-1940," in *Women's Suffrage in the Americas*, ed. Stephanie Mitchell (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, forthcoming).

working at night or doing dangerous jobs.¹⁰⁰ Domestic labor was not “work” in such an equation, and the fact that most domestic servants were women and girls reinforced the idea that the home was not a place of productive work.

Masculine labor discourses opened space for indigenous men within the labor movement. Indigenous hacienda workers struggled against paternalism on estates that they found emasculating, which dovetailed nicely with labor leaders' emphasis on workers' patriarchal dignity. Shared masculinity among workers across ethnic lines was reinforced not simply by divisions between home and work, but by the subordination of domestic work. Not all indigenous men could avoid serving as huasichamas in elite homes, but their struggle to limit such work often reinforced their masculine rights as heads of families. In contrast with indigenous estate workers, liberal (and seemingly even leftist) politicians had no incentive to advocate for domestic workers' rights: It would not give them an advantage over their political opponents, and they relied on low-paid domestic labor to keep their households running.¹⁰¹

Domestic servants' work did not change from earlier periods, but nor did most of the work done by indigenous workers on large estates. Yet the ideas about the work done by female household servants versus male indigenous workers diverged significantly by the 1930s. Attending to the widening gap between male hacienda workers and domestic servants reclaims the history of domestic service as valuable and its continuity as telling. It reveals ways that gender norms softened the class and racial contradictions of modernization. It also helps to explain why, even in the twenty-first century, domestic workers are often forgotten by both feminist and labor organizations.¹⁰²

*Bridgewater State University,
Bridgewater, Massachusetts,
United States
eoconnor@bridgew.edu*

ERIN E. O'CONNOR

100. *Código del Trabajo 1938*, Título I, Capítulo VII, “Trabajo de Mujeres y Menores.”

101. Politicians did not discuss this openly, and doing so would especially undermine socialist and communist leaders' claims to uphold the rights of poor workers. However, a former Chilean domestic worker named Bernardina Piñera told historian Elizabeth Quay Hutchinson that “There were even empleadas who worked in the homes of socialist and communist leaders, and these houses were the same: the señora might be very socialist or communist, but she didn't want the empleada living under her roof to take on an attitude of resistance.” This quote is from Hutchinson, *Workers Like All the Rest of Them*, 121. It is highly likely that Ecuadorian domestic workers had similar experiences in the households of radical politicians.

102. Bernardino-Costa, “Destabilizing the National Hegemonic Narrative,” 42. See also Masi de Casanova, *Dust and Dignity*, 109.