Finding aid to Sue Ko Lee Scrapbook on Chinese Ladies' Garment Workers' Union

Finding aid prepared by Wendy Welker
Labor Archives and Research Center
2018
San Francisco State University
J. Paul Leonard Library, Room 460
1630 Holloway Ave
San Francisco 94132-1722
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URL: http://library.sfsu.edu/larc
Title: Sue Ko Lee scrapbook on Chinese Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union

Date (inclusive): 1937-1938

Creator: Lee, Sue Ko

Extent: 1 album (44 pages); 26 x 32.5 cm.

Collection number: larc.srp.0011

Accession number: 1995/065

Repository: Labor Archives and Research Center
J. Paul Leonard Library, Room 460
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Abstract: Scrapbook belonging to Sue Ko Lee, a button hole machine operator at the National Dollar Store garment factory in San Francisco’s Chinatown, and member of the Chinese Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (CLGWU), Local 341. Collection available on site.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English, Chinese

Material Specific Details: Scrapbook is unbound; some material has come loose from pages.

Availability
Collection is open for research.

Restrictions
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General
Though scrapbook contents are from 1937-1938, the cover is entitled: ILGWU Golden Jubilee Convention, Atlantic City 1950

Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Sue Ko Lee scrapbook on Chinese Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union, larc.srp.0011, Labor Archives Research Center, San Francisco State University.

Acquisition

Biographical
Sue Ko Lee was a member of the Chinese Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union. After working at the National Dollar Store/Golden Gate Manufacturing, Sue Ko Lee became a business agent at another garment factory, then secretary of the union local and the San Francisco Joint Board, as well as a delegate to the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union national convention.

Historical
In the 1930s, the garment industry was the largest employer in San Francisco’s Chinatown and employees worked in sweatshop conditions, earning low wages. In response to these conditions, the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU) organized a campaign to keep work from flowing out of union shops to Chinese manufacturers and established the Chinese Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union, Local 361 in 1937. Under the leadership of ILGWU organizer Jennie Matyas, a successful union election was won at the National Dollar Store factory for better wages in 1938. The owner, a prominent Chinatown businessman, quickly sold the facility to Golden Gate Manufacturing, a supposedly new company, headed by the factory manager and another former National Dollar Store employee. This supposed change of ownership allowed management to disregard the hard won contract. Seeing this move as an attempt to break the union, the workers went on strike, picketing the factory and its three retail stores in San Francisco for 15 weeks before the owner finally negotiated with the workers to settle a contract.
Scope and Contents
Scrapbook belonging to Sue Ko Lee, a button hole machine operator at the National Dollar Store garment factory in San Francisco's Chinatown, and member of the Chinese Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (CLGWU), Local 341. Scrapbook contains newspaper clippings, bulletins and photographs pertaining to the CLGWU, mostly concerning the strike at the National Dollar Store/Golden Gate Manufacturing in 1938. Contains a few images of Sue Ko Lee, and International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) organizer Jennie Matyas. Includes bi-lingual invitation to CLGWU dinner party celebrating the opening of its Chinatown headquarters.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Chinese Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.
National Dollar Stores Strike, 1938 -- San Francisco (Calif.).
International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.
Golden Gate Manufacturing (San Francisco, Calif.)
Strikes and lockouts -- Clothing trade -- California -- San Francisco.
Women labor union members -- California -- San Francisco.
Women clothing workers -- California -- San Francisco.
Chinese American workers -- California -- San Francisco.
Scrapbooks.
Clippings.
Photographs.
Lee, Sue Ko -- Portraits
Matyas, Jennie, 1895-1988 -- Portraits