
Finding Aid to the Lusty Lady Collection

Finding aid prepared by Kate Tasker.
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2014

Title: Lusty Lady Theater collection

Date (inclusive): 1996-1998

Collection number: larc.ms.0365

Accession number: 2010/010

Extent: 0.4 cubic ft. (1 box)

Repository: Labor Archives and Research Center

J. Paul Leonard Library, Room 460

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Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English.

Abstract: This collection contains rank-and-file organizers' records relating to the successful campaign to unionize the Lusty Lady Theater in San Francisco, California. In addition to standard union issues such as pay, grievance procedure, hours, benefits and time off, this collection documents issues specific to exotic dancers, such as management rankings and rewards based on dancers' attractiveness, privacy violations resulting from one-way glass windows and patrons' unauthorized filming of dancers, and safety concerns. Materials include union and management flyers to employees and patrons, correspondence (including letters of support for the union), clippings, union meeting notes, notes refuting management arguments, National Labor Relations Board case documents, pamphlets, draft versions of the first collective bargaining agreement, and union meeting announcements. Also includes a copy of the manual "No Justice, No Piece! A Working Girl's Guide to Labor Organizing in the Sex Industry" (62 pages).

Location: Collection is available onsite.

Conditions Governing Use

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Availability

Collection is open for research.

Some material is restricted to protect personally identifiable information until 2050. Access restrictions are noted at the file level, and redacted copies are available when possible. Please contact the Director of the Labor Archives and Research Center for more information.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Lusty Lady Theater Collection, larc.ms.0365, Labor Archives and Research Center, San Francisco State University.

Separated Materials

DVDs and videos of "Live Nude Girls Unite" were transferred to the LARC Audio-Visual collection. One t-shirt from the Exotic Dancers Alliance was transferred to the LARC Artifacts collection.

Acquisition

Collection donated anonymously by a member of the Exotic Dancers Union in 2010, accession number 2010/010.

Processing Information

Processed by Kate Tasker in March 2014.

Arrangement

Collection is arranged as received.

History

In 1996 dancers at the Lusty Lady Theater in San Francisco brought their concerns about the club's one-way glass windows to their managers. Dancers were being filmed and photographed by amateur pornographers without their knowledge or permission, which was not only exploitative but a violation of privacy. The club had a "no cameras" policy but it was not enforced. When management didn't respond to dancers' requests to remove the one-way glass, workers contacted the

Exotic Dancers Alliance (EDA) in San Francisco. The EDA brought the workers together with Local 790 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and convinced the union's organizing staff to get involved.

Management removed the one-way windows, but did not address other workplace problems. Dancers complained that management played favorites based on a dancer's attractiveness, applied unwritten disciplinary policy inconsistently, and fired or suspended workers for ambiguous and questionable reasons. Employees and Local 790 organizers held a National Labor Relations Board union election in the summer of 1996 to put a contract in place. Management ran an anti-union campaign before the vote, but the union was approved 57-15, officially becoming the Exotic Dancers Union of the SEIU. Following several months of negotiations, a strike, and a lock-out, the EDU ratified a contract with the Lusty Lady Theater in April 1997. Workers secured job security, sick pay, automatic raises, and a prohibition on one-way windows. A second contract was ratified in April 1998. The Lusty Lady was the first and (as of 2009) only successfully unionized sex business in the United States.

When the Lusty Lady's owners decided to sell the business in 2003, the dancers bought them out and operated the theater as a worker-owned cooperative until it closed in 2013.

Sources:

"No Justice, No Piece! A Working Girl's Guide to Labor Organizing in the Sex Industry." 1998. Lusty Lady Collection, larc.ms.0365, Labor Archives and Research Center, San Francisco State University.

"A Brief History of the Lusty Lady Theater". *Lusty Lady San Francisco* website. <http://www.lustyladysf.com/history/>.

Burana, Lily. (2013 Aug 31). "What It Was Like to Work at the Lusty Lady, a Unionized Strip Club." *The Atlantic*.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/08/what-it-was-like-to-work-at-the-lusty-lady-a-unionized-strip-club/279236/>.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains rank-and-file organizers' records relating to the successful campaign to unionize the Lusty Lady Theater in San Francisco, California. In addition to standard union issues such as pay, grievance procedure, hours, benefits and time off, this collection documents issues specific to exotic dancers, such as management rankings and rewards based on dancers' attractiveness, privacy violations resulting from one-way glass windows and patrons' unauthorized filming of dancers, and safety concerns. Materials include union and management flyers to employees and patrons, correspondence (including letters of support for the union), clippings, union meeting notes, notes refuting management arguments, National Labor Relations Board case documents, pamphlets, draft versions of the first collective bargaining agreement, and union meeting announcements. Also includes a copy of the manual "No Justice, No Piece! A Working Girl's Guide to Labor Organizing in the Sex Industry" (62 pages).

Indexing Terms

Exotic Dancers Union.

Lusty Lady Theater (San Francisco, Calif.)

Service Employees Internation Union. Local 790 (San Francisco, Calif.)

Sex-oriented businesses--Employees--Labor unions--Organizing.

Stripteasers--Labor unions--Organizing.

Box 1, Folders 1-4

Organizing campaign 1996-1997

Access Restrictions

Folders 1, 3, and 4 contain material which has been restricted to protect personal privacy. Redacted copies are available.

Box 1, Folder 5

Originals for packet 1996-1997

Box 1, Folder 6

Union media coverage 1996-1997

Box 1, Folders 7-8

Bargaining contract (first) 1996-1997

Box 1, Folder 9

Bargaining contract (second) 1998

Box 1, Folder 10

Bargaining contract (third) 1998

Box 1, Folder 11

No Justice, No Piece! A Working Girl's Guide to Labor Organizing in the Sex Industry (spiral bound manual, 62 pages) 1998