

# **“New Haven's Garment Workers: An Elm City Story” Presented by the Greater New Haven Labor History Association**

**Olin Memorial Library**

**Wesleyan University**

252 Church St., Middletown, CT (860) 685-3844

**Monday, October 4—Monday, December 6, 2010**

*Free and open to the public*

***RECEPTION AND GREETING, Date to be announced***



This exhibit paints a vivid portrait of the lives, victories and defeats of a courageous group of working people in the clothing industry in New Haven, CT in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Background:

In 1932 and 1933, to combat sweatshop conditions in the clothing industry, workers from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union cooperated in an organizing campaign. Their efforts resulted in large-scale unionization of the industry and improvement in wages, working conditions, and hours.

The unions formed two locals, ACTWU 125 and ILGWU 151, which continued to organize together until the demise of the garment industry in New Haven in the late 1970s and 1980s. The locals became centers of social and political activities, involving members in decision-making and in cultural and sports activities.

This exhibit highlights the work, labor struggles and social and political lives of these union members. Initial panels depict the evolution of the clothing industry, conditions in New Haven's sweatshops, and the rise and dramatic victories of the unions in 1933. Subsequent panels show the growth of the unions and their involvement in political issues from the 1940s through the 1990s. Four panels depict garment workers' lives at home and the many social activities—dances, sports, picnics and holiday parties—organized by the locals.

The exhibit was produced for the Greater New Haven Labor History Association by Archivist/Director Joan Cavanagh, the late Dennis Hamilton, C.M. Carton and Julie Hamilton.

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Since its opening in 2006, this traveling exhibit has been displayed at 13 locations locally and throughout the state. It paints a vivid portrait of the lives, victories, struggles and sacrifices of a courageous group of working people in the clothing industry in New Haven.

### **Background**

In 1932 and 1933, to combat sweatshop conditions in the clothing industry, workers from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union cooperated in an organizing campaign. Their efforts resulted in large-scale unionization of the industry and improvement in wages, working conditions, and hours. Their history offers important lessons for all of us in these times.

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