

Wearing the pants: The gendered politics of trashwork¹ in Senegal's capital city²

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ABSTRACT

This paper draws on ethnographic research to trace the gendered politics of formal trashlabor in Dakar during Senegal's neoliberal period. Beginning with the founding of the trash sector in the Set/Setal social movement (1989), and tracing its social history through today's trashworkers' union battle, it explores the way that women's roles—and rewards—for trashwork are produced and negotiated differently in specific contexts through the mobilization of women's "traditional" domestic duties. This discussion illuminates how urban restructuring and participatory development play on and reconstitute gendered spaces and divisions of labor and connects the feminization of trashlabor to the urban labor question and youth politics. By bringing the household and political economy into conversation, it thus shows how gender is a key line of negotiation in the politics of development and highlights the ambiguous openings provided by the neoliberal era and the deepening of democracy that has accompanied it in Senegal.

Introduction

In the early 1990s in Dakar, Senegal, young women donned pants and baseball caps and, in plain view of their shocked families and friends, climbed onto garbage trucks in order to collect their neighborhood trash. An integral element of the youth social movement (Set/Setal) that rescued the capital city from an impending garbage crisis and, some would say, utter despair in the political system, these women were transformed alongside young male activists from voluntary neighborhood do-gooders into the city's low-paid trash collection force in the course of a few short years. Fifteen years later, they represent some of the more outspoken members of a trashworkers' union that is waging one of the most dynamic labor battles seen in Senegal's contemporary era. This transition, which turned young men and women into—by and large—their *own* neighborhoods' trash collectors, offers an insightful window into restructuring of the urban workforce in the wake of structural adjustment. While I consider its implications for youth politics and state power more

fully elsewhere (Fredericks, Forthcoming), this paper concentrates on the workings of *gender* in the social history of official³ trashlabor in Senegal's neoliberal period.⁴ Beginning with the pivotal moment of Set/Setal (meaning "Be Clean/Make Clean" in Wolof), and tracing developments up to today's union battle, it illuminates the contradictory openings provided by the mobilization and reconfiguration of women's "traditional" roles and labors. Thus, by understanding transformations in the social practice of waste management as simultaneously struggles over meaning and power, it lends insight into the gendered politics of labor in contemporary African development and the changing democratic landscape of this African city.

The transition of women from a youth movement into Dakar's trash sector appears to represent a paradoxical moment: it signaled their political emergence and entrance into new spaces and roles, while, at the same time, further entrenching them into dirty forms of labor built upon a naturalized connection to waste and impurity. As such, it is a rich case through which to explore how gender articulates with political-economic imperatives in the neoliberal transition. In particular, this paper will show how changes in the character of urban labor following structural adjustment—most notably, flexibility, the increased osmosis between the formal/informal and the reign of an ethos of self-help—work in and through gendered spaces and divisions of labor. It will reveal how gendered discourses of waste, especially the view that waste is women's work, get taken up to differentially burden—and reward—women and men with trashlabor over time. Though this analysis documents an overall pattern of feminization in the sector (women went from comprising 0% to 30% of the sector's 1500 jobs),⁵ it also shows how this pattern was far from a linear, uncontested progression and the different meanings that gender took in specific contexts. This discussion will illuminate how ideas of participatory development play on and reconstitute gender inequalities and will connect the feminization of trashlabor to the urban labor question and youth politics. By bringing the household and political economy into conversation, it thus shows how gender is a key line of negotiation in the politics of development and highlights the ambiguous openings provided by the neoliberal era and the deepening of democracy that has accompanied it in Senegal.

Urban restructuring and the feminization of trashlabor

Consistent with trends across the African continent, structural adjustment reforms and economic stagnation settled in over the last two decades with a groan, deepening the impoverishment of the Senegalese population and disproportionately straining the most marginalized members of society, especially women (Elson, 1989, 1991). Privatization and the withdrawal of the state from public employment in the 1980s (which one decade before had dominated wage employment in the country) joined with the decline of urban industry⁶ to precipitate the collapse of formal employment

in the 1980s and 1990s and a deep restructuring of the urban workforce in Dakar. In those few formal sectors where women dominated the formal labor force (e.g., the fish product industry), they were hit particularly hard by structural adjustment, both owing to those industries' sensitivity to liberalization and the inferior status of women's labor (Niang, 1997). Faced with widespread male unemployment, diminished household buying power and the rising cost of living, women in Dakar felt, nonetheless, increasing pressure to look for income outside of the home. Due to their inability to access most patronage resources and their low levels of education, as well as a general resistance among employers to hiring women, their efforts were overwhelmingly concentrated in the informal economy.⁷ Where women were able to break into shrinking formal job markets, it was often in the least desirable sectors.

In many respects, urban restructuring in Senegal reflects global trends in the feminization of labor: women entering the workforce *en masse*, but overwhelmingly occupying the most precarious and exploitative labor positions and, thereby, acting as a type of "subsidy" to production in neoliberal capitalism (Nagar et al., 2002; Wright, 2006). Gender is, of course, a key organizing principle of globalization and development; over the last twenty years, we have seen both a rise in female labor force participation as well as the proliferation of (feminized) low-end, contractual, exploitative jobs (filled by men and women) (Standing, 1999). Extensive research illuminates, moreover, how such processes of feminization have often been facilitated through gender stereotypes which designate certain labors as "women's work."⁸ Feminist scholars draw our attention to the household as the crucible of conflict and negotiation around the gendered division of labor and its dialectical connection to larger political-economic configurations (Carney and Watts, 1990; Guyer, 1981; Hart, 1992; Moore, 1992). They highlight, furthermore, that a language of community participation built upon constructions of women's traditional roles and spheres has often been indispensable within neoliberal development towards harnessing their labor at little or no compensation.

In the case of waste management, research in diverse settings reveals that gender stereotypes connecting women not only to nature,⁹ but to dirt, disorder and household wastes, end up reserving the dirtiest tasks in the household—and the city—for women (Ali, Olley and Cotton, 1998; Beall, 1997, 2006; Miraftab, 2004a, 2004b; Samson, 2003, 2007). For instance, Miraftab (2004a, 2004b) argues that, under the auspices of a neoliberal rhetoric of "voluntarism" and "skill acquisition," women were mobilized in Cape Town as voluntary "municipal housekeepers" in the poorest black townships. Similarly, Samson's work in Johannesburg has shown how, through exploiting "African women's more vulnerable position in the labour market" (2007:121), trends in waste management have reinscribed apartheid era racial inequalities and disproportionately burdened women with trashlabor. This literature raises serious concerns about the mobilization of gendered waste discourses and the feminization of official and informal trashlabor under neoliberal policies. Waste is, of course, a subject loaded with meaning, which sets wastework apart from other sectors. Mary Douglas' (1966) seminal work on pollution and taboo

illustrates how symbolic associations around impurity maintain social structures. Discourses around dirt and danger create social boundaries, she shows, and classify people into different social categories within a hierarchy of status. In considering the feminization of trashwork, we must therefore take into account the stigma that is attached to those who work with waste¹⁰ and the very real possibility that the feminization of wastework may enhance women's marginalization on a number of counts.

The analysis below will show that women's entrance into Dakar's trash sector was indeed premised on their "traditional" connection to domestic trash management in Senegal and brought about (initially) through a language of participatory citizenship that accompanied neoliberal restructuring. As such, it raises a number of the concerns flagged in the above discussion. However, the route to feminization in the trash sector has been unstable and highly politicized, and the case makes clear that the implications for workers are context-specific and more complex than would be assumed. To flesh out these tensions, this paper will explore the articulations¹¹ of political economy, gendered power relations and political identities in specific moments in the social history of trashwork in Dakar that have framed divisions of labor and their meaning for workers and their communities. This will illuminate the particular political circumstances through which the feminization of trashlabor in Dakar came about and was negotiated, the very different work that gender stereotypes effectuated in different periods and their instability, and the ambiguous opening it provided for women to enter new—even radical—spaces and roles. The discussion will explore, furthermore, how the gendered struggles over trashwork are produced and gain meaning through spatial practice (LeFebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994).

Set/Setal and the founding of a new trash system in Dakar

Bursting onto the streets of Dakar in 1989/1990, the Set/Setal movement was one manifestation of a wave of youth movements that shook the African continent in the 1980s and 1990s (Honwana and de Boeck, 2005). It is widely seen as a pivotal moment in Senegal's recent history. Involving the massive mobilization of Dakar youth to clean up the city—morally and literally—one neighborhood at a time, Set/Setal has been described as signifying the emergence of youth onto the political stage and their ushering in of a new post-nationalist political imaginary (Diouf, 1996). The movement followed on the heels of the massive, riotous and sometimes bloody youth demonstrations surrounding the hotly contested election of Socialist Party (PS) incumbent Abdou Diouf¹² for President in 1988 and the Mauritanian crisis of 1989,¹³ which had served as potent testimony to the sinister possibilities of youth agitation and contributed to the overall political crisis that closed out the difficult decade (Cruise O'Brien, 1996; Young and Kante, 1992). In contrast with

those *destructive* youth mobilizations, Set/Setal was unprecedented for its *constructive* nature—youth took to the streets in droves to cleanse, beautify and protect their local environments. Specific activities included: the building and cleaning of public spaces (including garbage collection), forming tutoring programs and neighborhood security forces, and painting the elaborate murals that are most associated with the movement today.¹⁴

Set/Setal represented both an indictment of the state's failings and a call for the citizens of Dakar to take local development into their own hands. Stemming from its roots in neighborhood associations (ASCs, GIEs or GPFs),¹⁵ Set/Setal brought together a decentralized, cosmopolitan and more or less demographically representative community of youngsters. Because these groups are pluralistic, horizontally-based organizations that unite people regardless of their educational status, ethnic group, religion, class or gender, the key feature of the movement was belonging to a neighborhood.¹⁶ While the movement is most certainly significant for our understanding of African youth and their political relevance,¹⁷ it is also important for the widespread participation of young women. This paper aims to recalibrate our understanding of Set/Setal, which has, to this point, been considered a male youth movement, by tracing the important minority of women participating in the movement and, then, the Set/Setal-based trash sector.

The immediate motivation for Set/Setal and its focus on cleanliness was the city's trash "crisis"¹⁸—which was taken as a symbol of the failures of urban management and the delinquency of those in charge. Created in 1985, the public corporation charged with the city's trash management, *Société Industrielle d'Aménagement Urbain du Sénégal* (SIAS), had begun to fall down on its duties and its workers had started agitating for better conditions by the late 1980s (some even held a "strike" where they dumped trash at the foot of the presidential palace in protest of late payments). In this context, the Set/Setal youth's cleaning activities became indispensable towards filling the gaps left by the flailing company, and the youth were gradually formalized into a citywide participatory trash collection system in the early 1990s. Mamadou Diop, Dakar's mayor (1984–2002), masterminded this transition by rallying support around periodic cleanup events—so-called "Days of Cleanliness" (*Journées de Propreté*). Eventually, the mayor began paying participating youth a small "reward" for their efforts, and they were institutionalized as a low-paid, parallel system of trash collection to that of SIAS, which was then formally dissolved in 1995. From 1995 to 2001, this youth group-based system was the city's primary trash system, and it was regularized and executed through a World Bank-funded public works agency (AGETIP).¹⁹ Officially managed under the newly created arm (CAMCUD) of the municipal organization federating the communes of Dakar, the CUD (*Communauté Urbaine de Dakar*), the youth associations were responsible for street sweeping and trash collection in their particular zones.²⁰ The leaders of the youth associations, in turn, became the system's on-the-ground leaders. The average rate of compensation during this time was 30,000 CFA/month (around \$60 today), but there were notable periods where

no compensation was seen at all.²¹ These youth activists-turned-trashworkers comprise the vast majority of today's trash collectors.

Though little recognized in the literature, young women were active participants in the Set/Setal movement. A neighborhood phenomenon, young women left their houses on the days scheduled for cleanup events—just like their brothers—and went to work improving the city. While not the majority in leading Set/Setal, women were nonetheless among its leaders and organizers. Their participation stemmed from two major factors: (1) women's increasing involvement in neighborhood management, whether through "female" sections of youth groups or through their own associations (GIEs or GPFs),²² and (2) their connection to the work of cleaning in the home. Sweeping, cleaning and dealing with household wastes are key elements of women's duties as managers of the domestic space in Senegal. Wastework in the home is thus naturalized as intrinsically women's work.²³ Women at the lower end of the household social hierarchy—according to age, marital status²⁴ and ethnicity—especially household maids,²⁵ are usually reserved the dirtiest and most onerous waste duties.

The task of household trash management in Dakar is a complicated challenge. The hot weather, high percentage of organic matter (including fish and animal guts) and lack of adequate storage facilities²⁶ and space in most Dakar homes make keeping trash from getting stinky and dangerous a tall order. The exacerbation of this challenge in the face of the withdrawal of funding for public services with structural adjustment and the failure of urban management systems to keep up with urbanization rates has certainly been most heavily borne by women in Dakar households. For this reason, it is easy to see how young women were not only well-equipped to help with the cleaning of the neighborhood, but also keenly motivated to be part of the solution to the garbage crisis which precipitated Set/Setal. The fact that they were seen as the "cleaners" in their households legitimized their place out and about cleaning with their male compatriots. As Set/Setal was formalized, women were thus well situated to be integrated into the trash system that was to be founded on the labors of the Set/Setal youth. The full implications of that integration, however, require deeper analysis.

Analyzing the feminization of trashwork in Dakar: Political crisis and women as an emerging constituency

The entrance of women into the official trashlabor force cannot be explained without contextualizing it within the intense political and economic upheaval that was taking place in Senegal in the late 1980s and early 1990s and its sociopolitical implications for women in Dakar. The trashlabor switchout occurred precisely at the political-economic conjuncture of Senegal's neoliberal transition, the rise of Set/Setal and the intense political competition of the 1990s. Compounded by the onset of the

country's deep economic woes and structural adjustment's devastating social consequences, the political events of the late 1980s precipitated a crisis of state legitimacy and reorganization of the state's formula of authority (Cruise O'Brien, Diop and Diouf, 2002; Diouf, 1996; Villalon, 1999; Young and Kante, 1992). President Diouf, who had introduced a number of measures in the 1980s to liberalize the political playing field, continued this process in the 1990s, allowing for real gains to be made towards multi-party political competition and, thereby, threatening the PS's political monopoly.²⁷ During this period, there was also growing recognition that people were voting more independently of their religious advisors, who had for years delivered their disciples' votes to the ruling regime, and that the urban areas were the wildcard that could determine the direction of electoral politics. Urban youth had emerged in the late 1980s as a particularly powerful force to be reckoned with on the political stage and women were emerging as a key constituency as well.

Contextualized within this unique political-economic moment—urban workforce restructuring, political crisis and the imperative to cater to new political clients—Set/Setal became one target in the state's reorganization of its formula of authority as a way to shore up support with the emerging constituencies of urban youth and women. The replacement of a corporate trash system with a voluntary, then low-paid, community-based system was thus, in short, a reaction to the evisceration of the state treasury with structural adjustment and to the opening of the political playing field that came with reforms initiated by President Diouf in the 1980s and 1990s. From the state's point of view, channeling Set/Setal men and women into the trash system offered not only a solution to a budgetary crisis and failing trash system, but also a calculated political maneuver to simultaneously bolster electoral support for the local PS apparatus and quiet the foreboding youth agitations that had taken the Dakar hostage in the late 1980s. The youth of Set/Setal therefore became the focus of a party battle, local-national state power play within the PS, as well as the focal point of one particular politician's (Mayor Diop) ambitions to conquer the political landscape of Dakar. A key urban labor sector, generally employing 1200–1800 workers, in an era where such jobs were becoming increasingly scarce, the trash sector represented an important patronage resource for the state. Moreover, the transition allowed the state to avoid the labor problem it faced with the SIAS workers by putting those workers out of a job and replacing them with lower paid labor.²⁸ As such, the switchout for urban men and women in the trash sector highlights both their utility to aspiring politicians and their arrival on the political radar as a force to be reckoned with.

With regard to women as a political constituency, by the 1990s, though there remained significant barriers to women's participation and power in the political process, they had made important headway in gaining visibility and representation. Women represented over 25 percent of national candidates for most political parties, with the number of women elected to political office increasing at all levels of government (Beck, 2003:158). Having been active in mobilizing political support

since before colonialism, in the context of increased electoral competition in the 1990s, women were taking on more and more importance as voters and political activists rallying support around male and female candidates (Beck, 2003; Callaway and Creevey, 1994; Creevey, 1996). In addition to providing a forum for their entrepreneurial activities (Sarr, 1998), women's neighborhood associations—among the most “dynamic grassroots associations that have emerged in Dakar” (Gellar, 2005:105)—had become (and remain) a particularly important forum for mobilizing voters and placing specific interests on the political agenda.²⁹

I argue that by funneling the early trash collection activities into political rallies centered around neighborhood associations and by offering the trash jobs as a form of political patronage, the PS aimed to transform women activists into political clients. In the tense political climate of the time, tapping Set/Setal was a strategy by Mayor Diop to make the local state more powerful, and gaining support among women voters was part and parcel of this plan. Trashworkers vividly recall the Set/Setal “Days of Cleanliness” as having become explicitly PS political rallies through which Mayor Diop tried to use the movement to his own political ends. Women, for their part, used the opportunity to seize onto rare formal jobs, as well as expand their sphere of political influence. Though some describe the recruitment of women—and women's organizations—at these rallies as more for their “applause” and votes than their leadership, in other areas, they were key leaders. In certain neighborhoods, women's associations were the central body around which the trash collecting activities were managed and their leaders the new sector's on-the-ground coordinators. The Set/Setal-based trash system thus enhanced women's visibility and provided them with a direct entrée to politics. In exchange for their participation in these political rallies and in rallying voters for the PS, women received jobs in the new trash system, a public forum for their activities and access to the mayor's office through CAMCUD. As part of the trash sector, women continued to be targeted for specific—often seen as political—roles in the sector, as discussed below.

Importantly, the transition to a community-based trash system was managed through a language of participation. A discourse of participation had taken over as mainstream development gospel and was a central pillar of restructuring policies. Mayor Diop—who was deeply implicated in international dialogues and networks—promoted the Set/Setal-based trash system with pride, as the ultimate moment of participatory citizenship during his tenure at the helm of what he called “the construction of a democratic urbanism” (Diop, n.d.). The system did, indeed, gain him some notoriety, as Set/Setal youth were an invited delegation at the 1994 Global Forum held in Manchester on the theme of “Cities and Sustainable Development” (Whittaker, 1995).

Wearing the pants: Gender and trashwork in Dakar

The 1990s

Through the mayor's political strategy to enhance his power by controlling the trash sector, young women gained a foothold in a formal economic sector and began occupying spaces and roles that were completely new. Though their entrance into official trashwork stemmed out of their place on the wider political-economic landscape, their new roles in the sector took work to come about and become legitimate, and were to change the sector and the lives of workers forever. This section explores the specific experiences of men and women in the first period of the new trash system and the gendered idioms through which the new labor arrangements gained meaning.

In most zones, early on, women trashworkers did exactly the same tasks as the men, including climbing, riding and filling the trash trucks. One woman who has been active in the movement since the beginning and who is now one of the few female controllers in the sector, recounts how the system began in the neighborhood of the Gueule Tapée (a central Dakar neighborhood):

I supervised a group of ten women volunteers. Each time that piles of trash had built up or whenever there was a collection [event], they would show up.... You could just see their love [for this work]. They wanted to be seen, that image of women on the trucks.... It was from this that [my colleague] volunteered to take these ten women and do the collection of Gueule Tapée. That was in 1995, 1996, 1997, and women were the only ones doing the collection (interview, December 5, 2007).

These particular women, nicknamed by their colleagues *Les Amazones* (the Amazons), were some of the pioneers of the Set/Setal movement and its transition into organized trash collection. Their early work—and their nickname—are an important indicator of complex gender roles implied by Set/Setal and the early trash movement.

The professionalization of the movement—and of women's labors—into a paid activity was not a development that went unnoticed. As Oumar Cissé, the ex-head of the Environment Commission of CAMCUD, put it, for women to get involved in Set/Setal voluntarily was not a problem. "But to work in trash, in the professional sense of the term, that was more than radical! It was extraordinary to see women on the trash trucks and all that!" (interview, March 11, 2008). This raises an important point: women's wearing the pants in the literal sense of the word was not nearly so radical an activity as "wearing the pants" symbolically, by getting paid (however little) by the state for those labors. Many women were wearing pants for the first

time in public, a non-traditional style of female dress that enabled them to more easily conduct the work (especially mounting the trucks),³⁰ but which could have been seen as controversial at the time. The act of becoming a young breadwinner with a formal job—often replacing that role for unemployed men in their households—was, however, even more significant. The women involved were fully cognizant of the radical nature of their new roles and recall the experience with intense pride. Contrasting trashlabor with another form of women's labor outside of the home—prostitution—they emphasized on countless occasions the upstanding moral qualities of “earning their bread with the sweat of their brow” (trashworker interview, July 8, 2008) and how much it meant to them to be able to work to support their families. Wearing pants, baseball caps and gloves, armed with shovels, rakes and whatever other scant materials were provided, these women were, according to my respondents, quite a sight to see out in the public space. The following account from a trashworker, who was very involved in Set/Setal and eventually became a manager in the trash sector, is illustrative:

At the beginning, people watched us and were surprised to see us working in the sector as women and exclaimed: “That one’s a woman!” It’s only because of my earrings that they recognized me, because I would wear sunglasses and a head wrap, then on top of it a baseball cap and all of that with the goal of protecting myself from the dust. With this outfit, it was difficult for people to distinguish the sex of the worker. Before, the men had a complex and were bothered about working in trash, but with the integration of women, that disappeared. Eventually, I felt proud when I climbed onto the trash-collecting truck with my work clothes on. Even more than all of that, there was a sort of unity and complicity between us, the workers of Parcelles Assainies. We didn’t have a complex about the work—that really was more of a problem for the men, because they would avoid passing by places where they were known (interview, December 6, 2007).

What’s interesting in this and similar accounts is the fact that, in the beginning, women were much less ashamed of working in trash publicly than men. A major feature of the new system was that most people worked in their *own* neighborhoods, serving their own communities. Previously, trashworkers in Dakar had mostly been transplants from other regions, were not considered true *Dakarois* and were constituted as radical outsiders. The first major obstacle to the Set/Setal-based system was getting the *urban youth* (read: male)—from average, even upstanding families—to accept the class stigma that came with working in trash. In all of the neighborhoods I surveyed, men recalled being embarrassed at first about working in trash. Worried that they would be seen by their girlfriends, parents and communities in general, they covered their faces so as not to be recognized, and some refused to work in their own neighborhoods. Women, on the other hand, had no qualms—they were often the first to climb onto the trucks and refused to hide their identities. Their

participation, alongside men, in the formalized trash system actually encouraged the men, dampening their embarrassment and enhancing community acceptance, as can be seen in the following trashworker's account:

At the beginning, we [women] were separated and placed as surveyors [on the ground].... Then after a while, we noticed that the people acted differently towards women and men [collectors]. We decided that it was necessary to put a woman in each truck as a security guard to do the collection with the men.... Because if a woman who came to dump her garbage saw another woman in the truck, she would re-examine her behavior compared to how she would have acted with men. By this time male collectors were abused, tired. It was seen that integrating the women in the trucks was going to facilitate the work of the men. Thus, we became security guards and went with the trucks to Mbeubeuss [dump] (interview, July 10, 2008).

Gendered subjectivities thus deeply shaped both trashworkers' experience of and their communities' reactions to these new roles and spaces. These differences—the unconcern on the part of women workers *despite* the radical aspects of their doing this work and the differentiated respect accorded to workers by the citizens they served—has to do with the gendered culture of trashwork and its status implications.

As mentioned earlier, domestic waste management is seen as exclusively women's work and, thus, all of the associated stigma for dealing with this form of "dirt and disorder" or "matter out of place" is already attached to them (Douglas, 1966). In contrast to the urban young men, who had not previously borne the brunt of association with waste, for women, the job was not a new or mysterious one. They dealt with household garbage everyday, which immunized them from many of the class concerns of the work. In the words of a male trash unionist:

The people closest to this problem are women. These are the same women who sweep³¹ at home so they don't have any complexes about trash. A man who sweeps, well, that's rare. In general, it's women. It was difficult [to get the men to work], but we succeeded all the same in getting rid of their complexes to have them work in the system. Now each day there are people [including men] who come to see if they can work in the trash sector (interview, June 29, 2007).

This quote illustrates the complex articulations of status, class and gender that lend meaning to trashwork. For men, although their participation in the cleaning activities of Set/Setal was legitimized because it was seen as an altruistic deed for their communities, the implications of the work changed with its professionalization. Once they were paid, they faced the stigma attached to *being* a trashworker—in all

of its feminine and class connotations. Although they were often holding their first formal jobs and felt pressure to contribute to the family income as well, young men often faced more of an “identity crisis” in the early stages of their trashwork. For women, conversely, the professionalization of Set/Setal actually enhanced their standing because of its *lack of* gender differentiation—they did all of the same tasks as men did *and* got paid for them. In this respect, their occupation of the same roles as men—and the relatively equal consideration of their labor in relation to men’s—can be seen to have masculinized women’s cleaning labor in the period following Set/Setal. The system acted as a platform for women to occupy new roles as financial breadwinners, often for the first time, and to extend their domain of influence into the public sphere. Interestingly, one way that men have demanded respect for their trashlabors has been their insistence on its spiritual value as a holy service of purifying the city. In distinct contrast with women, who never explicitly made the connection between trashwork and Islamic service, a large number of men explicitly defended the work’s value on religious terms.³² Though I consider this more fully in other work, I use it here to emphasize that gender identities always work in relation to other identities in shaping subjective experiences of trashwork.

Recent developments: 2000–2008

Through the strange twist of fate which turned a social movement into an underpaid, community-managed trash sector, women became key members of the trash sector in Dakar in the early 1990s. Legitimated through their role as the managers of trash in the home, they cracked what had been an all male sector and began to clean Dakar’s boulevards. While many of these same women remain in the sector today, their place, role and rewards in the sector have been far from static. An analysis of the last 15 years shows that gendered discourses have in fact been some of the key lines around which changes in the social history of trashlabor have turned—and in often surprising and non-linear directions. Overall, a contradictory trend emerges: whereas the early Set/Setal-based system actually played down gender differences—men and women (especially the masculinized *Amazones*) did the same work (with different implications for the masculinity or femininity of the men and women involved)—women’s positions in the waste sector have more recently been targeted for differential treatment. This trend can be observed with two developments: (1) as the official sector became more formalized and the jobs more sought after; and (2) as community-based projects initiated by a voluntary, non-government organization exploded on the scene at the end of the 1990s. Within the former (official sector), the emphasis on gender difference has justified both the firing *and* hiring of women at different times and places, and within the latter (NGO projects), solely women have been solicited for voluntary neighborhood trash management. Both will be briefly considered below.

In 2001, Dakar's trash sector was officially privatized when the state signed a 25-year contract with AMA-Senegal, a private subsidiary of an Italian waste management company (AMA-Rome).³³ This closed out the nebulous institutional arrangements under which the trashworkers had labored for almost ten years as a non-contract, volunteer-to-low-paid labor force.³⁴ The arrival of AMA made women's occupation of what had become more sought after and lucrative jobs a point of contention. AMA hired the workers as long-term employees in 2002–2003, and they began to receive health coverage, vacation and other benefits. The pay of the "surface technicians" (sweepers and collectors) was raised to 62,500 CFA/month (~\$120 today).

With the arrival of AMA, the trashlabor force was downsized and, though it is impossible to know exactly how many might have been laid off, it is clear that in certain instances this prompted the firing of women workers.³⁵ In Yoff district, for instance—where the labor force required by the new company was half the previous staff (from around 60 to 30 employees)—the result was the complete layoff of all women workers (as well as some men). Curiously, the two implicated managers present quite different justifications for laying off women workers. The overall zone manager explained that the women had been let go in the downsizing because they were *not* main breadwinners, and thus they had less rights to the jobs than their male counterparts (interview, November 16, 2007). The sector boss, on the other hand, had a very different explanation:

Before, there were a lot more of us. There were women. There were lots of women, even. Then, at a certain moment, they said they needed those on the trucks, the collectors, more than the sweepers. And the women were sweepers. We got rid of all the women because they weren't part of the collection crew. What's more, there were some women who were older ... they were with the politicians. In general, it was [the politicians] that sent them and all they could do was sweep. At the moment when we had to get onto the trucks, we needed to shrink our numbers.... In this case, we needed to remove those who couldn't mount the trucks. Because at that time we were working with open-top trucks and women couldn't climb onto them. So, it was necessary to keep the youth (interview, November 23, 2007).

Thus, we see three different justifications for removing the women: that they needed the jobs less than their male counterparts, that they had inferior physical abilities and that they were too "political." In an added twist, the sector boss mentioned that he'd had to fire his own wife, admitting that she had been quite angry in reaction. Overall, those women who lost their jobs still resent the fact that they were seen as a disposable workforce, defending their hard work and length of commitment in the sector.³⁶ Ironically, it was the same women who had been the pioneer collectors in certain neighborhoods who were later fired because they were seen as inappropriate for the job. Their firing demonstrates the tensions faced as women's roles in the

household and urban economy were shifting in a society where men were traditionally seen as the heads of households and main breadwinners.³⁷ The final sentence of the quote, furthermore, echoes an interesting theme in this research that raises a number of concerns for understanding the social categories of youth and gender: the definition of youth as male.

The women's role in the trash sector clearly represents an evolving debate that raises a number of concerns about women's labor, domestic duties and ideas of physical difference. This underlines the important dialectical connection between household labor and the political economy of work in Dakar. Even Madany Sy, the trash union's Secretary General—seen as a friend to women in many respects—while praising his women workers for the great work they do, is quick to highlight that many are not cut out for the work:

...you see, the work is not really adapted to certain women. There are women, for instance, you see their physique, the *pagne* [wrap-around skirt that women customarily wear], who, well, can't do certain tasks. What's more, it's a dangerous job that demands lots of physical energy. It's true that we try to do everything so that at least these women don't get injured but ... to tell the truth ... this job is not suited for those women. Often, with the volume of work that they have, it is difficult. How can you, for example, nurse your child if you're working? It is you who must cook at home. You go to the job in between but you don't even manage to do your job correctly. You have to take care of your husband, your children. You must take care of the needs of your family, and at the same time you still find volumes of work waiting for you. Thus, there's a problem.... On the other hand, there are some women who really do not have anything to envy of the men. There are women who are really brave, resourceful and who do extraordinary work. Because in their time, there were women who rode on the trucks.... These were *Les Amazones* of the Gueule Tapée (interview, July 10, 2008).

What this insightful statement highlights is one of the key problems intrinsic to the feminization of labor: that often women entering the formal labor market end up doubly burdened as they continue to be responsible for all of the reproductive activities at home. Many of the women who have remained in the system are now both the primary breadwinners *and* still responsible for childcare, cooking and cleaning duties. Judged by their male peers for not performing the same quality work, this can become a point of contention at the workplace. Although these women may be occupying the same position as men, the authority relationships between men and women in the household are, moreover, most certainly implicated at work. In addition to reports of a certain resentment directed towards them for work allegedly done less well, women also have reported gendered discrimination for minor infractions, promotions and the like. What's interesting is the contrast

between this insistence on gender difference today and the premise of gender equity seen in the Set/Setal days. Gender became an issue, in other words, as the jobs became more desirable. Not surprisingly, some of the most dramatic problems have come about for the handful of women who are in actual positions of leadership managing teams with men and women. One sector manager, who had been deeply implicated since the beginning and widely praised by many for her contributions, was fired in 2007 for speaking back to her male boss. This again demonstrates the difficult position women are in as workers and leaders occupying increasingly sought-after jobs.

The privatization of trashwork was, overall, a mixed blessing for women. In some cases, being female worked in their favor and sometimes to their disadvantage—illustrating the complexity of the workings of gender in this case. During the AMA period (2002–2006)—which has been called the “golden age” of trashwork for all workers—women seem to have fared quite well. Although still a minority, more women achieved leadership positions and, in certain neighborhoods, a cushy new post called *ambassadrice* was created, for which women were hired to “educate” communities about improved neighborhood management. Many male trashworkers looked back at these well-paid positions with resentment—referring to the women as *Diriankès* (a Wolof word emphasizing the women’s large size) and accusing them of just being useless, politicized posts. The favors women received during this period stand in contrast with the starkly negative impacts of the privatization of trash management on women in other places and highlight the importance of the specific political-historical context.³⁸

Trashworkers’ conditions have changed dramatically in Dakar since 2006, when the state severed its contract with AMA-Senegal. Although still receiving the same monthly compensation, the workers find themselves again without contracts, benefits or medical coverage. While most zones are currently collected using the original AMA labor force and privately contracted vehicles, the state has contracted with the French company, Veolia, to collect the downtown area’s trash on a trial basis. In addition to criticism that has been leveled against this contract for the company’s extremely large budget³⁹ and allegations of connections between Veolia and the Senegalese President’s son, the company has also come under criticism for its hiring practices. Veolia not only hired its workers on a non-contract, day-labor basis through a temp agency, but it also started off on the wrong foot with the workers by defying previous promises to hire all ex-AMA workers. It also now appears to be actively *recruiting* young women in their districts—justified, in the opinions of some, because they are seen as better workers and less likely to rock the boat (drawn from personal interviews of trashworkers and one of Veolia’s collection managers). At the same time, much to the consternation of the union, Veolia has also been firing workers—including women—with abandon, and has put into place labor conditions that the union calls exploitative and dangerous.⁴⁰ The company’s practice of night shifts for sweepers (including women) came under so much fire from the union and other observers that in some areas women have been taken off

these shifts or the shifts have been changed altogether.⁴¹ While Veolia was not a central object of this study, suffice it to say that the current moment of crisis and institutional rearrangement in the trash sector is just the most recent chapter in the evolving story of gender and trashwork in Dakar. The pattern with Veolia appears to follow much more closely trends in the feminization of labor elsewhere: the company is at least attempting to use gender in its pursuit of more flexible, less accountable and cheaper labor.⁴² As unprotected workers in one of the city's most dangerous and risky sectors, all trashworkers suffer from today's dire conditions,⁴³ but the situation is perhaps most perilous for women, given the double shift they work at home and in the street.

The fuzzy line between the formal and informal trash sectors that was introduced with Set/Setal was, in fact, only the beginning of a continuing osmosis between paid and voluntary trashlabors. In the late 1990s, a number of Set/Setal-inspired community-based trash projects were initiated by an NGO in peripheral, difficult-to-service Dakar neighborhoods (see Fredericks, Forthcoming). Rooted in ideas of women's connection to trashlabor, entrepreneurial spirit and perceived skills as community managers, these projects were centered on women's *voluntary* labor through a language of participatory citizenship.⁴⁴ In Yoff, where the project was intended to relieve the state's collection responsibilities in notoriously inaccessible and dirty areas, the project was staffed primarily by ex-trashworkers (women) who were laid off when the zone was downsized. Conveniently, it was when these women's entrepreneurial potential was no longer desirable in the paid sector that it was touted in the voluntary sector. While these projects are not the focus of this article, I highlight them to show how gender continues to be a key feature of negotiations around the social division of trashlabor, the precedent set by Set/Setal for participatory trash management and the very real possibility for gender to be instrumentalized in exploitative labor arrangements.

Gender and the union

The main trashworkers' union, SNTN (*Syndicat National des Travailleurs du Nettoyement*; National Cleaning Workers' Union), was founded in 2000, just before the arrival of AMA, by a group of Set/Setal-turned-trash sector leaders, including the dynamic Secretary General, Madany Sy. Although the union was perhaps a bit too intimately tied to the company's administration during AMA's tenure, since the state severed its contract with AMA in 2006, the SNTN has been waging one of the most visible and mobilized labor battles in Senegal's recent history. With massive participation in the general strikes it has been using to protest delays in payment, precarious labor conditions and, most recently, the firing of unionized employees of Veolia, the union has periodically held the city captive to its own garbage in order to give voice to the plight of its workers. With frequent coverage in radio and print

media, it has placed itself center stage in debates around the institutional organization of the sector and improved working conditions. While only small gains have been made as of yet,⁴⁵ the union's activities have, nonetheless, redefined the profession and placed the trashworkers' plight on the minds of all *Dakarois* and the state, alike.⁴⁶

While the union has certainly made strides in women's representation and participation, it is safe to say that it still reflects many of the patriarchal values that exist in Senegalese society. Though there is a "Women's President" on the executive board, who is in charge of "women's issues" and responsible to women workers, and though, as seen in the quote by Secretary General Madany Sy above, there is a certain level of recognition of women's double burden, women's contributions are not as welcome as men's in meetings; they are not among the key decision makers; and they are not considered as worthy as men to hold these jobs. In two of the General Assembly meetings I attended, women's attempts at taking the floor precipitated heated exchanges in which they were told to sit and wait their turn. When asked about the "Women's President," a female sector manager described her as someone who used to be their outspoken advocate but who "stopped talking" once she was placed in this post (interview, December 6, 2007). When they did express themselves in union meetings, however, women made some of the most powerful interventions and often called for more radical actions to be taken by the union in negotiating with the state. Though an exact count of the number of union representatives who are women was not available, over 25% of those present at one of the union's representative meetings in 2007 were women (my own survey of the SNTN representative meeting, November 24, 2007).

Most women workers, however, stated that they considered the union to be friendly to women. It is important not to assume, furthermore, that women trashworkers in Dakar primarily identify as women or that they wage politics on a gender platform. A strong number of them refused to admit that there were even "women's issues" at stake. This may be a problem of definition, a weakness of the interview process or just an indication that these women do not frame their labor battle in those terms. In fact, when asked if they felt they faced disproportionate strain as women or if these jobs were particularly difficult for them, a majority responded that no, in fact, the male collectors had it worse, as women were only sweepers now and collecting (working on the truck) is seen as a harder job. Though this may represent their rejection of any admission of their fragility or inferiority in order to guard their right to be trashworkers, it may also simply indicate that they identify first as workers, in unity with their colleagues, before they do as women. This resonates with Maxine Molyneux's (1985) account of the subordination of women's interests for the common cause in the context of the Nicaraguan Revolution. It also echoes postcolonial feminists' warning against a West-centric feminist reading which places "third world women" disembodied from their cultural contexts and limited to their gender identity (Mahmood, 2005; Mohanty, 1991; Spivak, 1988). Rather than presuming the form and direction of women's interests

and agency, this study has been more concerned with exploring how their gender identities may articulate with other identities to shape political platforms.

Overall, the trashworkers' union is probably more conscious of women's issues and accepting of women's leadership than many institutions in Senegal, simply because it is a young organization in which young men battled, from the beginning, alongside their sisters, for respect and fair compensation. The difficulties faced between men and women on the job and in the union emerge mainly when issues of authority and preferences for hiring/firing become an issue, but among the ranks of uniformly paid sweepers and collectors, one can see a deep level of comradeship and unity in the face of difficult conditions shared by all.

Conclusions

The last twenty years in Dakar have seen tremendous political-economic changes and, with them, deep shifts in men's and women's roles in the family, the economy and politics. This paper has shown how the politics of garbage are constituted in and through those dynamic gendered spaces and divisions of labor. As not only a fundamental public service, but also a bastion of formal labor in an era of informality *and* a symbol of the country's development, the social history of the trash sector thus helps to illuminate how the neoliberal political-economic transition in Senegal gets battled out along gender lines. By examining gender roles within the household and their implication in negotiations around the urban labor question in the wake of structural adjustment, we can see that women's "traditional" connection to trashlabor provided cultural legitimacy to, first, the participation of women in a youth movement oriented towards cleaning up the city, then, their jobs as a key slice of the city's paid trashworkers, and finally, as the central targets in voluntary community-based projects in certain neighborhoods. Some of these trends—particularly the most recent developments—confirm the possibility that discourses naturalizing gendered responsibility for dirty work can be deployed to further entrench women into exploitative labor positions.

At the same time, this analysis also shows that the workings of gender in development must be analyzed within specific historical contexts, and are unstable and often full of contradiction. In certain respects, the story of gender and trash in Dakar challenges a narrative of the feminization of labor that paints it as an inevitable, uni-directional process. The feminization of Dakar's trash sector came about through a very specific set of circumstances—and their different meanings for different players—which were immensely political. This history shows how women's connection to trash is reconstituted in different settings and that, in fact, they may *gain* some political voice within this strategic essentialism. This paper has aimed to flesh out those tensions and fractures—manifested in the spatial practices of women in pants climbing onto trash trucks—through which embedded power

structures have been destabilized and gendered understandings reworked. As Simone (2003) has pointed out with regard to the community-based trash project in Pikine district of Dakar, it was precisely because women's involvement in garbage management went below the radar, because trash is women's work, that they were able to use these projects as "platforms for reaching the larger world" and channel them to their economic advantage. Similarly, women's connection to trashlabor in the home allowed them to be key participants in a fairly gender-radical movement (Set/Setal) through which they became active political subjects. The trash case thus illustrates the complex implications of the deepening of democracy in Senegal during this time and women's rising importance as a political constituency. Though their emergence as political clients is not synonymous with the acquisition of political power—in local, nor trash union politics—this is a significant development, nonetheless, that needs to be located within the landscape of democratic politics in Senegal.⁴⁷ Women's involvement in Set/Setal, moreover, challenges the historic legacy of Set/Setal as a *male* youth movement and raises some key questions about where young women fit into understandings of youth politics in Senegal and beyond.

While it is important not to overplay the openings and opportunities provided by the transition from Set/Setal to the trash sector, they are, nonetheless, useful in interrogating understandings of how economic change is produced. This period, characterized by economic as well as political liberalization, was ripe with the challenges posed by democratization amid worsening economic conditions. This analysis has shown that neoliberal restructuring was far from an object that was "plopped down" from on high in singular form, but, rather, that specific political-economic trends emerge through certain conditions that are not necessarily coordinated or assured. It is important that the switchout of the trash sector for youth and women—originally intended to shore up support for the state among these constituencies and quell a labor dispute with the previous workers—now undergirds the current labor movement and the threat it provides to efforts to flexibilize this workforce today. The union's battle—and the role of women in it—is one of the openings we can see as a consequence of the remarkable founding of Dakar's trash sector in a social movement. Whether Senegal's current liberal regime will hear out the union's demands that wastelabor not always remain, for men and women, a trashy, unprotected job remains to be seen.

NOTES

¹ "Trashwork" (or "trashlabor") is used here to describe those labors that go into managing domestic garbage. Though related to those activities performed at home, this discussion will focus on those "street-level" activities aimed at garbage collection and disposal.

² This article is based on over 16 months of ethnographic fieldwork in 2007–2008 for a doctoral dissertation in geography at the University of California, Berkeley, with generous funding from the National Science Foundation, U.S. Department of Education (Fulbright-Hays), and the Social Science Research Council. Many thanks to Michael Dwyer, Asher Ghertner and Malini Ranganathan for comments on earlier versions of this article.

³ This analysis is centered on the “official”—also termed “formal”—trash sector or those activities sanctioned by the state for the capital’s trash management. This discussion will, however, demonstrate the fluidity that often exists between “official” waste management and so-called “informal” (voluntary, community-based) activities, and in so doing, problematize the formal/informal binary and the state’s role therewithin.

⁴ Senegal’s neoliberal period, which is unique in its particular manifestations, is considered here to begin with the deepening of structural adjustment in the mid-1980s and continuing with the election of liberal President Wade in 2000 to the present day. I consider the use of this term in this context more thoroughly in my dissertation (Fredericks, Forthcoming).

⁵ Although the exact number is unavailable, according to the trashworkers’ union, the total number of women in the trash sector just after Set/Setal was probably around 30%. It is currently 20%–30% and rising, as explained later. The total number of trashworkers (sweepers and collectors) has averaged about 1500 (1200–1800 during this time).

⁶ For one case which is particularly illuminating, see Catherine Boone’s (1992) thorough and persuasive examination of the Dakar textile industry, 1930–1985.

⁷ The flexibility afforded by the informal sector offered women the opportunity to supplement their household income while continuing to perform their reproductive labors at home, thereby doubling, in many cases, their labor burden (Callaway and Creevey, 1994; Ndiaye, 2006, 2008).

⁸ The “nimble fingers” argument is perhaps the most well-known example of a biological argument for women and child labor in certain industries. See Salzinger (2003) for a provocative exploration of the construction of gender in the workplace in Mexico’s global factories.

⁹ Shiva (1989) has long argued women’s inherent connection to nature and their role as nature’s custodians.

¹⁰ The lines of difference along which low status is conceived are specific to the context. Street sweepers in Faisalabad, Pakistan, for instance, have traditionally been Christians, because of their previous associations with low status and impurity (Beall, 1997). In India, waste work has long been associated with caste, among other divisions (Prashad, 2000).

¹¹ I am drawing here from the concept of articulation as developed by Stuart Hall (1980).

¹² The handpicked successor to Senegal's first president, Leopold Sedar Senghor, who led the country 1960–1980, Diouf took the reins in 1981.

¹³ Diplomatic ties between Senegal and Mauritania were severed and several hundred people (estimates vary between 100 and 1,000) were killed in April and May 1989 in a spate of looting, rioting and reprisals in both Dakar and the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott, as well as in other towns on both sides of the border. The ethnic violence was allegedly sparked by a dispute over grazing rights along the Senegal River (Parker, 1991).

¹⁴ See ENDA (1991) for an in-depth documentation of the murals and the movement. Some of the murals are referred to in Roberts et al. (2003).

¹⁵ These are the three main types of relevant neighborhood groups: ASCs, *Associations Sportives et Culturelles* (Sporting and Cultural Associations); GIEs, *Groupeement d'Intérêt Economique* (Economic Interest Groups); and GPFs, *Groupeement de Promotion Féminine* (Women's Interest Groups). Though generally the first youth groups were sports-based ASCs, due to their origin in the seasonal sporting activities or *navetanes*, neighborhood associations of all types were becoming much more popular at the time and were a key element of the Set/Setal trash system (Niang, 2000).

¹⁶ See Gellar (2005), Chapter 7: "The art of association." This varied, of course, by neighborhood and by flavor of the ASC. In more well-off neighborhoods, youth tended to be more educated, for example, but because of the level of unemployment, often even those educated youth were very active in their youth group. In terms of ethnicity and other divisions, certainly in some neighborhoods specific ethnic groups dominate (e.g., the Lebou in Yoff), but overall, ASCs are found to be quite representative of the local demographics.

¹⁷ For some of the key texts, see ENDA (1991) and Diouf (1992, 1996). See also Biaya (2005); Cruise O'Brien (1996); Cruise O'Brien et al. (2002); and Fredericks (Forthcoming).

¹⁸ The garbage problem of the late 1980s was just one in a series of so-called garbage "crises" that have periodically taken the city hostage to its own waste. I discuss the current crisis (2006–2008) more fully in my dissertation (Fredericks, Forthcoming).

¹⁹ The Public Works and Employment Agency, or AGETIP (*Agence d'Exécution des Travaux d'Intérêt Public contre le Sous-emploi*) was formed in 1989 and rolled out in the 1990s with the goal of generating a significant number of—mainly manual and temporary—jobs for unemployed youth. AGETIP investment projects were aimed at improving living conditions in poor urban neighborhoods in order to satisfy certain basic needs that had eroded with adjustment policies (World Bank, 1992, 1997).

²⁰ The CUD was created in 1983 as a governing structure over the greater region of Dakar (including Pikine and Rufisque). As stipulated in Decree 83-1131 (October 3, 1983), the CUD was responsible for the household waste management in

the Region of Dakar. CAMCUD (*Coordination des Associations et Mouvements de la Communauté Urbaine de Dakar*) was specifically created to manage the participatory trash sector within the CUD.

²¹ Trashworkers recall periods of 3–6 months at a time with no compensation.

²² For instance, the now “President of the Women” in the trashworkers union had been vice-president of the women’s section of her neighborhood youth group, ASC Niary Tally.

²³ Women’s connection to ritual impurity through Islamic custom may reinforce their association with the cleaning duties, but this connection was not directly explored in interviews. For a discussion of the South Asian context, see Beall (1997).

²⁴ Single women are of lower status than married women, and older wives are considered higher in social rank than younger wives.

²⁵ More well-off families in Senegal have household maids (*bonnes*) who help with the domestic duties of cleaning, cooking and childcare.

²⁶ Most homes do not have trashcans, as they are considered too expensive and it is assumed that they will inevitably be stolen.

²⁷ Robert Fatton argues that political liberalization under Diouf in the 1980s acted as a “passive revolution” in the Gramscian sense, bent on reorganizing the state and thereby diffusing an organic crisis and threat from the left (Fatton, 1986:729). See also Fatton (1987).

²⁸ Not all SIAS workers lost their jobs. Though difficult to assess, it is estimated that about 200–300 ex-SIAS workers were integrated into the new system. Some of these workers were organized into fictitious youth groups and others were placed into existing youth groups.

²⁹ See also Patterson (2002). Her work, however, demonstrates that despite the growing mobilization of women and some of the possibilities opened up by decentralization reforms, there are many blockages to women being equal participants in the political system in Senegal.

³⁰ At first, the trucks were open top, not the rear-opening conventional trucks we associate with the job today. Women found that, in order to climb and ride on these trucks, as well as do the sweeping, pants were often required.

³¹ Sweeping (*balayer* in French and Wolof) is a term used in Senegal to describe general cleaning activities.

³² In Fredericks (Forthcoming), I discuss how male trashworkers were found to identify their work as an act of Islamic purification and to even identify as a “priesthood” of Muslim trash collectors. I am careful not to presume, however, that men made this personal connection more than women, but, rather, to explore the value that publicly *articulating* the idea held for one group versus the other.

³³ As can be seen here, the trajectory of the waste sector is far from a simple history of privatization. While I discuss this more thoroughly in Fredericks (Forthcoming), this provides further evidence that Senegal’s particular neoliberal

trajectory must be considered for its own character and specificities. SIAS is best described as a partially state-owned corporation. It was managed at the national, not municipal, level.

³⁴ Workers' status and pay did shift over the decade and was not consistent over the whole city. For instance, in certain areas that were organized under AGETIP, workers made as much as 45,000 CFA/month, whereas in other areas, the rates of compensation remained around 30,000 CFA/month. Both rates are still quite low (30,000 CFA = about \$60 in 2000). With the changing of the political guard (*Alternance*) in 2000, the municipality's arm charged with managing the associations involved in trash management, CAMCUD, was dissolved and the sector was managed in an interim period by a newly created national agency before it was fully privatized with the arrival of AMA. On the whole, during the pre-AMA period, the labor force remained without long-term contracts, benefits or protections.

³⁵ Some women also left voluntarily when they got married or had children.

³⁶ Interestingly, a couple of these women were then selected to be the *voluntary* waste managers in the community project that was launched a couple of months later in the same neighborhood with horse-drawn carts.

³⁷ We can see that this period was challenging ideas of both femininity and masculinity—as men were forced to reckon with their inability, in many cases, to properly care for their families as expected.

³⁸ See research on South Africa (Miraftab, 2004a, 2004b; Samson, 2007). Samson's research in Johannesburg, for instance, showed that privatization of waste management has disproportionately burdened women wasteworkers by employing them as a voluntary or near-voluntary labor force in poor areas.

³⁹ For cleaning only two of Dakar's 40 communes, Veolia gets paid half of the city's total budget for trash collection. The trashworkers' union, local contractors and the workers all see this as corrupt and unfair.

⁴⁰ The union alleges (and this is backed by some interviews with Veolia workers) that workers are being made to work illegally long hours, are kept from taking breaks and have been fired for such simple things as drinking water at work.

⁴¹ The union won its battle with the company in September 2008 when it called a general strike across Dakar to protest the firing of workers for their participation in the union. The state intervened and the workers were hired back on. See "130 agents licenciés puis repris" ("130 agents fired then hired back on"), *Nettali* (Dakar), September 22, 2008, <http://www.nettali.net>.

⁴² When interviewed on May 15, 2007, a representative of Veolia stated that he believed the company had no intention of officially hiring their employees in Dakar and that they would continue to work with the temp agency indefinitely.

⁴³ There was an outbreak of tuberculosis among trashworkers in August 2007 and a number of treatable deaths have occurred due to the lack of medical care. See "Menace d'épidémie de tuberculose chez les eboueurs: Les ex-travailleurs d'Ama décomptent plus d'une dizaine de décès" ("Threat of a tuberculosis epidemic among

trash collectors: The ex-AMA workers count more than ten deaths”), *Nettali* (Dakar), August 7, 2007, <http://www.nettali.net>.

⁴⁴ For the NGO literature on the projects, see Gaye (1996), and Gaye and Diallo (1997). For a discussion of how women were able to channel these projects into useful collaborations, see Simone (2003).

⁴⁵ Since the summer of 2007, they have now been received numerous times by the mayor of Dakar, the Minister of the Environment and, finally, the director of Veolia—all of whom had previously refused to see them. These negotiations have accelerated the liquidation process of AMA, resulted in the paying off of the garage workers, regularized the payment schedule and, most recently, won the right of Veolia workers to join the union. See “130 Agents Licenciés puis Repris,” *Nettali* (Dakar), September 22, 2008, <http://www.nettali.net>.

⁴⁶ In Fredericks (Forthcoming), I analyze the *Dakarois*’ perspectives on the trashworkers’ situation. In particular, I explore the trash “revolts” that occurred in the summer of 2007 where whole neighborhoods organized to dump their trash in city streets during the trashworkers’ strike. My respondents made it clear that, on the whole, they supported the workers and that the goal of their “revolts” had been to send a message to the government to resolve the dispute and pay the workers.

⁴⁷ On women in politics in Senegal, see Beck (2003); Callaway and Creevey (1994); Creevey (1996); and Patterson (2002).

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