***Lesson Plans: Grades 9-12***

**Garment Workers of South Jersey: An Introduction**

**Introduction**

Garment workers supported an industry which became central to the lives of many 20th century South Jersians. The oral testimonies collected in *Garment Workers of South Jersey: Nine Oral Histories* present a view into an industry that both aided and complicated the lives of garment workers.

This lesson will have students investigate the nine oral testimonies presented in the collection *Garment Workers of South Jersey*. Students will close read, source, and contextualize the recorded oral testimonies. The activities presented in the lesson will allow students to foster an understanding of the lives and role in South Jersey history.

**Essential Questions**

1. What does it mean to be a worker in a garment factory?
2. How did the garment industry influence the lives of its workers?
3. What common themes and events are central to those working in the 20th century garment industry?

**Learning Objectives**

*Students will be able to*

Close read oral history testimonies to assess the importance of the garment industry for its workers and South Jersey.

Collaboratively analyze the importance of the garment industry in the lives of its workers.

**Lesson Activities**

**Activity 1**

Focus Activity: How does where we work/go to school shape our identities?

1. Close Reading. As a class, students will engage in a close reading of Anne Liberto’s oral history testimony. As they read, the teacher will ask the class to write down any important information from the testimony. Students will answer a series of questions including the “who, what, where, when, and why” of the testimony. After the class discusses these elements, the teacher will model for students how to approach the additional testimonies they will investigate. Specifically the teacher will ask the following questions:
   1. What do you think was happening when it was recorded?
   2. What can you tell about the person telling the story, and about that person’s point of view?
   3. Is it more personal or historical?
2. Class Discussion. The teacher will ask students to develop two discussion questions based on their close reading of Liberto’s testimony. Students will engage in a discussion using the questions they generated.
3. Collaborative Investigation. Students will be divided into eight different groups. Each group will be given a different oral testimony from Garment Workers of South Jersey. The groups will engage in a close reading. Students will analyze key understandings of the testimonies they read, how the garment industry shaped the workers identity, and what commonalities they found with Liberto’s reading. Students will be asked to develop an informational slide about their assigned testimony.
4. Class Debrief. Students will share and compare what they discovered about the garment workers. The teacher will facilitate this conversation, focusing on how the garment industry shaped the identities of the women working there.

Closure: Students will develop a conversation starter on the role of identity in Garment Workers of South Jersey. As a homework assignment, students will be asked to take their conversation starter home to discuss with a parent, guardian, grandparent, teacher, or other trusted adult.

**Common Core Standards**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.3

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

**American Studies Habits of Mind**

Exploring the relationship between identity and culture

Seeking out diverse perspectives

Practicing collaboration and public engagement

**Teacher Preparation**

1. Read the article “Ready to Wear” for background on the garment industry: <https://bellatory.com/fashion-industry/Ready-to-Wear-A-Short-History-of-the-Garment-Industry>