



2019 HAWAII UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES
ARTS, HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCES & EDUCATION JANUARY 3 - 5, 2019
PRINCE WAIKIKI HOTEL, HONOLULU, HAWAII

“PATRIOTUTES” OF HOTEL STREET: THE UNTOLD STORY OF JEAN O’HARA, *THE HONLULU HARLOT*



BONSER, BRITTNEY
HISTORY DEPARTMENT
CEDAR CREST COLLEGE
ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

Ms. Brittney Bonser
HIS 390: Senior Capstone
History Department
Cedar Crest College
Allentown, Pennsylvania

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Synopsis:

This paper delves into the life of a brothel prostitute in Honolulu, Hawaii during World War Two. Their story outside of the brothel was a life of patriotic sacrificing to volunteer their time, mind, and body for our country. In turn, the women were abused and treated inhumanly as their basic rights were taken from them. This paper follows the story of Jean O'Hara as she courageously stood up against the brutal police vice squad.

“Patriotutes” of Hotel Street:

The Untold Story of Jean O’Hara, *The Honolulu Harlot*

“I am not going to attempt to excuse myself for the kind of life I have led. I shall tell you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and when you have finished reading this book, dear reader, a wave of nausea will engulf you.” – Jean O’Hara in her expose “Honolulu Harlot” page 15

“Because of the complexity of such issues, providing sexualized services for the military was open to misinterpretation and often stigmatized the providers and left them vulnerable to legal charges. Prostitution was illegal, promiscuity was immoral, female sexuality was dangerous, but sexual labor was essential to the war effort— a veritable catch 22.” - Hegarty, Marilyn E. in *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes* page 85

Brittney Bonser
“Patriotutes” of Hotel Street:
The Untold Story of Jean O’Hara, *The Honolulu Harlot*

This paper proposes that prostitution in wartime Hawaii was an illegal, but a necessary and empowering evil for white female sex workers across the islands, many of whom hailed from the mainland. The 25 brothels stabilized the economy, improved medical treatment for STD’s nationwide, and boosted American soldiers’ morale in the darkest days of WW II. Even as they challenged American social norms around gender, race and class, these women did not have the freedom of movement or freedom of choice to spend their earnings and to enjoy the beauty of the islands as they pleased.

The life and story of cradle Irish Catholic Jean O’Hara of Chicago, arrested four times for prostitution before arriving in Hawai’i, illustrates the virtual slavery under which these women lived their daily lives on the Hawai’ian islands. The girls were ruled by the so called “10 Commandments of the Red Light District,” stating the prostitutes of Hotel Street were not allowed to have lives outside of the brothel, and if they tried they were severally and brutally punished. For example, O’Hara tried to leave the house after curfew to be with her husband and was beaten so badly by the police that she sustained broken ribs, a broken jaw, a broken nose, multiple bruises; the officer even ripped her silk pajamas. To make matters worse she was arrested and denied medical treatment for three days. The madam sat back and watched this beating, only stopping to state that she “hopes that this will be a lesson to the rest of the girls not to break Chief Gabrielson’s orders!”¹

Women like the Harlot O’Hara, who openly defied the 6-month time limit on sex workers by being a prostitute for four years on the islands, quickly became activists and advocates for a

¹ O’Hara, Jean. *Honolulu Harlot: An Expose of Honolulu Vice Conditions*. Hawaii, 1944.

new social order in the highly rigid military patriarchy of martial law Hawaii, enforced by Police Chief Gabrielson of the Honolulu Police Department's vice squad. Women like O'Hara organized a 21-day silent strike around the MP/police station to win the right to keep their wages, to enjoy Waikiki Beach, to own property and a car, to attend USO dances, to visit golf courses and to wire money to the mainland. The Prostitutes physical presence on Hotel Street not only meant a successful strike for them, but it also desegregated island life well beyond the brothel line, including social spaces such as bars, theaters, malt shops and dance halls within the military industrial complex of the islands.

For American soldiers, many of whom hailed from the racially charged, highly segregated American South, changing their mindset from racial segregation to racial integration in the hyper-diversity of Hawai'i was a monumental change for them. The original culture shock to the islands is what led the military to sponsor white women from the mainland to 'entertain' the enlisted. What the men wanted was the girl next door, not the girl from around the world. Despite the initial segregation of the sex trade for its military clientele, indigenous people still found a way to make a prosperous living in the sex trade. In fact, the brothel madams were indigenous Hawaiians who earned \$150,000 a year while the prostitutes earned anywhere from \$30,000 to \$70,000.² Prostitutes of color, though, charged and earned less than their white cohorts. The prostitutes went on strike, at least in part, to end the color line because the only color that mattered to them was green; a local's money was just as green as the white soldiers. For women like Jean O'Hara though, their job was not about the money; it was about being part of something bigger, exploring the world and asserting their agency as workers with basic rights and women with dignity. . For these women, expressing the personal prerogative of their minds,

² Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. "Prostitute on Strike: The Women of Hotel Street during WW2" WWII Hotel Street. Pdf. <http://jackiewhiting.net/HonorsUS/Labor/WWII%20Hotel%20Street.pdf>.

and the physical control over their bodies, were after all, some of the most cherished American values which those soldiers had fought so hard to defend across the Atlantic, and in the Pacific itself.

“My sense of shame and sin aroused in me a pervasive independence” states Jean O’Hara in her expose of her working life entitled “Honolulu Harlot.”³ Whether they are called comfort women, victory girls, *patriotutes* or prostitutes the women all have the same job. Their job is to remind soldiers of home and life outside of the battlefield. In fact, young women from all over the United States would volunteer to entertain our troops and do their civil duty by becoming a “patriotute”. “[This] term was used primarily to describe women who, in responding to the nation’s call to service, crossed an all-too-ambiguous line between the good and the bad women.”⁴

Despite the negative stereotype of prostitutes, they greatly influenced the success of the country and soldiers during World War II, especially on the islands of Hawaii. Jean O’Hara was one of these brave and bold women who took to the call and moved to Hawaii to work in a brothel or prostitution house. While working in Hawaii O’Hara spent time with the Red Cross, in the brothel, at dances, and in prison for speaking her mind. In contrast to the iconic Rosie the Riveter, the wholesome female mascot of war, O’Hara expressed her agency, and served her nation, as a sexual patriot. “Victory Girls were considered ‘too’ patriotic when they appeared to be sexually available, that is, promiscuous.”⁵ Promiscuity was needed though to allow prostitution to operate and raise the moral of the GIs.

³ O’Hara, Jean. Honolulu Harlot: An Expose of Honolulu Vice Conditions. Hawaii, 1944. 6

⁴ Hegarty, Marilyn. Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II, New York University Press, 2007. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cedarcrest-ebooks/detail.action?docID=866109>. Created from cedarcrest-ebooks on 2018-11-26 07:32:23. 13

⁵ Hegarty, Marilyn E. 1998. "Patriot or Prostitute?: Sexual Discourses, Print Media, and American Women during World War II". Journal of Women's History. 10 (2): 123

Prostitution exists during times of war because war itself wreaks such dramatic psychological and physical devastation, in which World War II was certainly no exception.⁶ For the United States alone their 16 Million soldiers were reduced by 1 Million after the final casualty counts were done.⁷

On December 7, 1941 Pearl Harbor, Hawaii⁸ was attacked by the empire of Japan.⁹ In a few short hours a total of over 3,400 Americans were killed or injured on ‘this day that will live in infamy.’¹⁰ “The Japanese strike force left behind a nightmare scene of destroyed battleships, damaged infrastructure¹¹, and over 2,400 Americans dead. Plumes of smoke from fires blazing across the oil-slicked waters¹² were visible from many parts of Honolulu.”¹³

⁶ There were 16 Million American soldiers that entered into the war over the course of 6 years between 1939 and 1945. All countries involved collectively lost: 15 Million were killed, 25 Million were wounded, estimated at least 45 Million Civilians were killed. In “Research Starters: Worldwide Deaths in World War II.” The National WWII Museum | New Orleans. Accessed December 1, 2018. <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/research-starters-worldwide-deaths-world-war>.

⁷ “Research Starters: Worldwide Deaths in World War II.” The National WWII Museum | New Orleans. Accessed December 1, 2018. <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/research-starters-worldwide-deaths-world-war>.

⁸ Hong Kong, Guam, Philippines, Wake Island, the Midway, and the open seas from Hawaii to San Francisco were also attacked the same night by Japanese forces as told by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in “Our Documents - Transcript of Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War against Japan (1941).” Accessed December 1, 2018. <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=73&page=transcript>.

⁹ That day in a matter of 2 hours 2,400 sailors, soldiers, and marines were killed. Another 1,000 were injured. 428 were trapped in the sunken USS Oklahoma and 1,102 are trapped aboard the USS Arizona. in LoProto, Mark. “After the Attack: Rebuilding Pearl Harbor,” November 3, 2017. <https://visitpearlharbor.org/attack-rebuilding-pearl-harbor/>.

¹⁰ “Our Documents - Transcript of Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Japan (1941).” Accessed December 1, 2018. <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=73&page=transcript>.

¹¹ Twenty ships and submarines, eight battleships, three-hundred aircraft along with countless buildings, runways, highways, and civilian infrastructure were destroyed beyond repair. Bullet holes are still seen today at Naval Base Pearl Harbor in Pearl Harbor - World War II.” Accessed March 25, 2018. <http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/pearl-harbor>

¹² More than just the naval base was hit. Wheeler Airfield and Marine Corps Air Station lost over 70% of their aircraft. Today the total destruction and lives lost in the attack are honored at the Punchbowl Cemetery where marble columns have the names of over 10,000 Americans missing in action and presumed dead from the war in the Pacific Theatre in “WWII in Hawaii: Beyond Pearl Harbor.” Orange County Register, May 27, 2012. Accessed August 01, 2018.

¹³ LoProto, Mark. “After the Attack: Rebuilding Pearl Harbor,” November 3, 2017. <https://visitpearlharbor.org/attack-rebuilding-pearl-harbor/>.

With all of this devastation happening morale was incredibly low worldwide. The United Services Organizations (USO) tried multiple ways to raise this low morale.¹⁴ Having the base exchange stores fully stocked with “3.2 beer, tobacco, candy, shaving cream, and the like” was a major morale boost for the GIs stationed overseas in Europe and Japan, but it did little for the troops stationed in Hawaii.¹⁵ Activities from free wrestling matches and baseball games to shipments of high end cigarettes and liquor were quick fixes that raised morale as long as the supply lasted. Even ice cream socials and dances could not keep spirits high enough. The best solution was to bring in performances from actresses and striptease dancers.¹⁶ These performances included “provocative” and “sizzling” shows with belly dancers, a taxi cab routine, and “the chorine in the nightclub with black net stockings up to her mezzanine”.¹⁷ One of the most requested shows worldwide was called “heir to a G-string” by dancer Gypsy Rose Lee.¹⁸ All of these women, in their own unique way, were vital in winning the war. For those GIs in remote locations without access to performers or victory girls women were encouraged to send pin up pictures like Betty Grable to any and all service man they knew.¹⁹

The simplest and longest lasting solution to raise the soldier’s spirits was to satisfy one of man’s basic needs, sex. During World War II prostitutes, voluntarily and forcefully, serviced every country drawn into the war.²⁰ Jean O’Hara, a devout Catholic born into a well-established

¹⁴ The USO offered everything possible to the military as a way to positively use their time off instead of visiting bars and brothels in Cooke, James J. 2012. *American girls, beer, and Glenn Miller: GI morale in World War II*. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=3440811>.

¹⁵ Cooke, James J. 2012. *American girls, beer, and Glenn Miller: GI morale in World War II*. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=3440811>. 33

¹⁶ Cooke, James J. *American girls, beer, and Glenn Miller*

¹⁷ Hegarty, Marilyn E. 1998. “Patriot or Prostitute” 122

¹⁸ Cooke, James J. *American girls, beer, and Glenn Miller*

¹⁹ Hegarty, Marilyn E. 1998. “Patriot or Prostitute” 124

²⁰ “By the 1940s U.S. society, including the media, had become increasingly eroticized. Sex had entered the marketplace in a variety of ways. Forms of commercial entertainment, such as dance halls, amusement parks, and movie theaters, patronized first by the working class and later by the middle class, brought young women and men

family in Chicago, decided to volunteer her time as a patriot to raise morale for the military soldiers and civilian war workers stationed on Oahu.²¹ O'Hara was not alone however, over 200 other patriotutes picked up their lives and moved to Hawaii to work in the twenty brothels of Hotel Street.²² The brothels of Hotel Street functioned at factory level efficiency, so much so that a soldier is quoted "she'd give him a short-arm inspection, slip a condom on his penis, and *wham, bam, thank you ma'am!*"²³

Ted Chernin, a civilian war worker, was given a map of where each brothel was located when he arrived on the island.²⁴ Prostitution became an answer due to the "fear of female sexuality, often perceived as dangerous, can be found throughout history, especially in times of change [and war]. As a result of preconceived notions about and attitudes toward female sexuality."²⁵ The attitude of the time period believed respectable women would not willingly sleep with a soldier because it is the patriotic thing to do.²⁶ Only dangerous women were perceived as willing to offer their bodies to the men saving the world. The men were just kind enough to pay them for the time spent with a lonely enlisted instead of a high ranking officer.

together in new and public ways. Courtship practices moved "from front porch to backseat,"¹¹ that is, young women and men went on unchaperoned dates, sometimes in automobiles. By the 1920s, the figure of the flapper represented a freer sexuality, a suggestion of the female right to sexual experimentation. Many young women joined the urban workforce, enrolled in coed colleges, changed their style of dress, experimented with makeup, and enthusiastically embraced modernity. These changes in and challenges to traditional sex and gender norms, often referred to as the "first sexual revolution," were reflected in print media—novels, short stories, magazine articles, and advertisements—as well as in film." In Hegarty, Marilyn E. Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes page 113

²¹ O'Hara, Jean.

²² O'Hara, Jean.

²³ Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson. 2011. Flimflam artists: true tales of cults, crackpots, cranks, cretins, crooks, creeps, con artists, and charlatans. [Bloomington, Ind.?]: Xlibris Corp. Pg 133

²⁴ Map included in Appendix

²⁵ Hegarty, Marilyn E. Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes 12

²⁶ "Open prostitution somehow seemed to confirm mainland stereotypes of Hawaii as primitive, licentious place populated by dark-skinned natives" in Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. Prostitutes on Strike

Not only were prostitutes used in Europe, but they were heavily used in the Pacific as well. Japan was well known for its “comfort women” to supply morale to the Japanese troops. Unfortunately, the United States was influenced by Japan and some of the Japanese prostitutes that worked in Honolulu prior to World War II were sex slaves that got brought to the island.²⁷

Hawaii was no different than the rest of the world when it came to the need of female companionship. Within the few years the number of GIs on Oahu rose constantly as more and more military units were sent to Hawaii to fight in the Pacific theatre. Having so much testosterone in paradise led to the influx of prostitution as well.

An editorial in “Hawaii”, a magazine supported by the haole²⁸ elite, stated it clearly: If the sexual desires of men in this predominately masculine community are *going to be satisfied*, certainly not one of us would rather see them satisfied in regulated brothels than by our young girls and women- whether by rape, seduction or the encouraging of natural tendencies.²⁹

If the chore of keeping these beastly military men satisfied was not a job for respectable women, then how did the military find themselves having girls in abundance just outside the base limits? Japan used sex slaves and European countries used girls with no place to go home to. The United States and Hawaii solely used volunteers to indulge the soldier’s needs. Girls from all over the country volunteered to entertain our troops and do their civil duty by becoming *patriotutes*. Hawaiian use of volunteer *patriotutes* further became a term, and way of life, and

²⁷ Prior to World War II the majority of prostitutes on the island of Oahu were of Japanese descent ranging in age from 18 to 24 in the early 1900s. Japanese women were sought due to the belief that their bodies were “strong and clean, and they rarely passed on diseases.” In Hori, Joan. 2009. Japanese Prostitution in Hawaii During the Immigration Period. Honolulu, Hawaiian Historical Society. <http://hdl.handle.net/10524/111>.

²⁸ Hawaiian term for white outsider from the mainland

²⁹ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. The First Strange Place: Race and Sex in World War 2 Hawaii. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992. 99

was used to describe the constant worry and surveillance of anyone who “challenged sex/gender norms”.³⁰

With the fear surrounding these women’s intentions, morals, and health risks to the military the government tried to keep prostitutes at bay and away from the soldiers with the passing of the May Act.³¹ “The passage of the May Act in July 1941 added another weapon to the government’s arsenal. Prostitution became a federal offense in areas around defense plants and military bases.”³²³³ This law did little to stop the women or soldiers from keeping each other company though, because in places like Honolulu, Hawaii the Marshal and Chief of Police thought regulation in brothels was the best course of action instead of pimps and street corners.³⁴ The May Act and Federal law as of July 1941 was “assiduously avoided” since everyone on the island, civilian and military, could agree that “the sexual desires of men” were best “satisfied” in regulated brothels than show interest “our young girls and women— whether by rape, seduction or the encouraging of natural tendencies.”³⁵ Regulation was also considered a way to lower venereal disease rates and make medical advances in that field.³⁶ “The committee apparently was more concerned with whom the servicemen had sex with than with the fact that they were

³⁰ Hegarty, Marilyn E. *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes*

³¹ Representative Andrew J. May introduced and created the act which took his name in Hegarty, Marilyn E. 1998. “Patriot or Prostitute” 115

³² Hegarty, Marilyn E. *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes* 14

³³ “292 red-light districts were shut down almost immediately (after the passing of the May Act). By 1945, over 700 [more] vice districts would be closed.” In Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *The First Strange Place*

³⁴ “Regulation meant that prostitutes would be required by law to operate in a segregated district and would be subject to regular medical inspection. If found diseased, they would be confined in a treatment facility; if free of venereal disease, they would be issued health cards to that effect.” In Hegarty, Marilyn E. *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes* page 46

³⁵ Hegarty, Marilyn E. *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes* 98

³⁶ “Clearly the patrons were willing to practice safe sex and use the stations. Gonorrhea rates dropped between 1941 and 1944. There were 239.9 cases per 100,000 people in 1941. In 1942, 1943, and 1944, the number of cases continued to decrease to 219.2, 215.7, and 208.2, cases per 100,000, respectively” in Rose, Rebecca J. *Prostitution in Hawaii* page 63

engaging in sex. Their comments on morale suggest that sex was all right if it occurred with an “appropriate” morale builder.”³⁷

Morale building and morale maintenance emerged as significant concerns of the state apparatus; the military must be fit to fight both physically and psychologically. Government officials assumed that women would provide such services to the military, and they did. There was, however, a hidden cost for many women, who often (inadvertently) crossed an ambiguous and fluid line dividing acceptable and unacceptable behaviors; the patriotute became a symbol for such women. The subject of male sexuality was both present and absent in these discussions. Since many authorities took as a given the male need for sex, their concern was not to prevent men from sexual liaisons but rather to ensure that they would be protected from venereal disease and fit to fight.³⁸

Patriotutes would volunteer or already were a part of the sex scene before making their way to Honolulu, Hawaii’s red light district. A majority of these girls come from middle class backgrounds or large cities.³⁹ Girls is a better term to describe the prostitutes than women since 64% of the sex workers in Chinatown were under the age of 21.⁴⁰ The change from local workers to white mainland women was just the morale builder the military needed. According to feedback “from reports in the field, it was clear that GIs wanted to see American Girls as much as they wanted to drink American beer.”⁴¹

Jean O’Hara, a devote catholic, was one of the many women who voluntarily ran away to the Pacific to be a “victory girl.” She was the daughter of a well-known physician in Chicago, Illinois who made a successful career as a prostitute due to her god given characteristics of empathetic strength and undeniable beauty. “At 17, Jean was already a beauty. She had dark hair

³⁷ Hegarty, Marilyn E. Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes 104

³⁸ Hegarty, Marilyn E. Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes 14-15

³⁹ O’Hara, Jean. 12

⁴⁰ Greer, Richard A. 2009. Dousing Honolulu's Red Lights. Honolulu, Hawaiian Historical Society. <http://hdl.handle.net/10524/138>.

⁴¹ Cooke, James J. 39

and eyes and a ravishing complexion. She stood 5'4" and weighed 120 pounds. She was not hard to like. Jean was charming, feisty, and possessed a devilish sense of humor."⁴² At the adventurous age of 17, she was introduced to a woman at a party bedecked in jewels and fancy clothes. Intrigued by a life of adventure, freedom, and lust, O'Hara agreed to work with the woman and started her long working life of 13 years in "the oldest profession" of prostitution.⁴³ After one month of working in Chicago she moved on to a bigger city with more clientele, San Francisco, California. Within a few years she found herself leaving San Francisco by auditioning to work in Hawaii.⁴⁴ Her next and final move was to the Hawaiian Island of Oahu in 1938 for the next six years.⁴⁵

Hawaiian auditions were necessary so that not just any girl was supporting our troops, only those who could perform quickly were of use to the madams. Pimps or procurers would test the prostitute's capability to perform both physically and mentally.⁴⁶ Physically, she had to finish the job; mentally she had to be able to repeatedly finish the job. Psychological, and physical, strength and resilience were the main characteristics which the madams wanted in order for the prostitutes to satisfy mass clients in an assembly line fashion. After passing an audition, madams would pay pimps anywhere from \$500 to \$1000 for the new prostitutes to be sent to work at the brothels. The prettier and spunkier the girls the higher the price became.⁴⁷ Jean O'Hara revealed that the madams might have paid for the girls but it was the vice squad whom they met first on

⁴² Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson. 128

⁴³ Prostitution in Hawaii peaked in 1860 with 257 women age twelve to thirty working in brothels. That number slowly declined over the years and dramatically jumped at the start of the World Wars. At the end of World War I prostitution was at over 100 women, most of which were Japanese. At the start of World War II the number of prostitutes dramatically jumped to over 200 with the influx of military in Hawaii. In Greer, Richard A. 2009. *Collarbone and the Social Evil*. Honolulu, Hawaiian Historical Society. <http://hdl.handle.net/10524/366>.

⁴⁴ O'Hara, Jean. *Honolulu Harlot: An Expose of Honolulu Vice Conditions* 5

⁴⁵ Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson. 2011. *Flimflam artists*

⁴⁶ O'Hara, Jean. 13

⁴⁷ O'Hara, Jean. 13

the island. Waiting to herd the new prostitutes off the ships they quickly photographed and finger printed the women, distributed their entertainer's license when the dollar fee was paid, and read them the rules. That very same afternoon the girls were put to work.⁴⁸ For the months following the attack on Pearl Harbor entrance to the island was restricted to military necessity only. To seduce the ships to let the prostitutes travel to Hawaii they would "wink and wiggle" while explaining they were USO entertainers⁴⁹ being sent to raise morale. Naturally, the women were shipped out on the next boat to assist our troops.⁵⁰ During the restriction when mainland girls were hard to come by, defense workers' wives filled the vacant rooms at the brothels. Wives were not ideal workers though, as they did not have the strength or tenacity to treat over 100 men a day like they were the most important person in the world.⁵¹ "The madams kept count, and the shirkers were treated harshly. The women paid for their perseverance with disease and broken health. In 1943, 120 prostitutes were hospitalized 166 times for a contagious venereal disease."⁵² After the initial money was made, most madams released the wives due to this unsatisfactory service.

Critics of the women who volunteered their time for the war effort say that "the marking of some female bodies as 'just made for that' and endorses the view of a prostitute as "a woman reduced to her sexual utility."⁵³ "Because of the complexity of such issues, providing sexualized services for the military was open to misinterpretation and often stigmatized the providers and left them vulnerable to legal charges. Prostitution was illegal, promiscuity was immoral, female

⁴⁸ O'Hara, Jean. 19

⁴⁹ At least six prostitutes did sail to Hawaii at a time when passage was highly restricted to military only under the job title of entertainer in Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *The First Strange Place* page 108.

⁵⁰ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *The First Strange Place* 108

⁵¹ O'Hara, Jean. 13

⁵² Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *The First Strange Place* 100

⁵³ Hegarty, Marilyn E. *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes* 91

sexuality was dangerous, but sexual labor was essential to the war effort— a veritable catch 22.”⁵⁴ Outsiders and those disgusted by the women’s jobs saw them as nothing more than useless pieces of meat that fulfilled their fullest potential by being sex workers. “This uncritical acceptance of prostitution in some instances supported a broader notion of ‘women as [only good] for the sexual services of men.’ In some places, people called openly for maintaining a ‘buffer of whores’ to protect respectable women.”⁵⁵

To keep the ‘whores’ out of view of impressionable and respectable classes of society the ‘commandments’ of prostitution were created. It may have been titled Ten Commandments to reinforce how important the rules were, after all, one would not want to break a commandment of god like having intercourse out of wedlock. The commandments were twenty unwritten rules that must be followed.⁵⁶ “The cops made it clear that any girl brassy enough to violate these rules would be roughed up by HPD enforcers.”⁵⁷ If broken there were severe physical punishments and the felon was most certainly deported and banned from the islands. Some of the commandments of prostitution were: not allowed to visit Waikiki Beach, any bars, or the better class cafes; could not own property or automobiles; could not attend dances or visit golf courses; could not leave the brothel after 10:30p.m.; and could not wire money to the mainland.⁵⁸

The *patriotutes* in Honolulu, Hawaii’s Red Light Vice District were good for more than just a sexual release. “Within months of the attack on Pearl Harbor, 30,000 and more soldiers, sailors, marines, and war workers killed time in the vice district on any given day. Close to 250,000 men a month paid three dollars for three minutes of the only intimacy most were going

⁵⁴ Hegarty, Marilyn E. *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes* 85

⁵⁵ Hegarty, Marilyn E. *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes* 91

⁵⁶ O’Hara, Jean.

⁵⁷ Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson. 129

⁵⁸ O’Hara, Jean.

to find in Honolulu.”⁵⁹ There were over 200 women who called the twenty regulated brothels of Hotel Street Honolulu home at any given time during World War II.⁶⁰ These women did not just sit around during the day waiting for the men to line up outside their doors, they were integral parts of Hawaiian society. “In the wake of Pearl Harbor, there was a sweep of gratitude for the girls of Hotel Street and their ‘patriotic sacrifices’.”⁶¹

Much of this gratitude is due to the immediate reaction of the women when the attack on Pearl Harbor began. These women did not run, they gave their beds new sheets and opened the doors to anyone they could get up the stairs. Prostitutes offered their beds and their empathy. The women sweet talked and calmed down the hundreds of fatally injured men. For the women who could not handle the sight of injuries they wrote names of the men in their care and letters home to the families of those who did not make it.⁶²

For months “the brothels in Chinatown were turned into temporary hospitals and many prostitutes worked as nurses. More prostitutes would have helped if officials had not turned them away because of their profession.”⁶³ Once doctors found out what the women did at night, most times by visiting them themselves, the prostitutes of Hotel Street were banned from aiding the wounded out of fear they would spread diseases. This belief became obsolete when hospitals realized how desperate they were for the help and when the women protested for the ability to show their patriotism outside of the brothels. *Patriotutes* like Jean O’Hara “visit[ed] the returned wounded... They spen[t] time with those whose hurts will heal and with those who are injured

⁵⁹ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *The First Strange Place* 95

⁶⁰ O’Hara, Jean. 16

⁶¹ Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson. 133

⁶² Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson

⁶³ Rose, Rebecca J. *Prostitution in Hawaii: The World War II Experiment*. Hawaii: Graduate Division of the University of Hawaii, 2007. 51

permanently. They dance, if the men are able. Sometimes they play[ed] cards or write letters... Sometimes instead of hospital visits, the girls meet at surgical dressing centers or care for babies at the local hospitals to relieve the shortage of nurses.”⁶⁴

Not only did the victory girls volunteer as makeshift nurses, but they took on acceptable roles as well. “The bombs of Pearl Harbor converted many of the prostitutes into [traditional] war workers. A number of the houses offered quarters to evacuees; the girls cooked and did housekeeping chores.”⁶⁵ It was a pleasant change for the women to be viewed in a positive societal manner such as their ‘Rosie the riveter’ comrades were.

Patriotutes helped in the kitchens and hospitals, but most importantly, they helped keep the men out of the hospital by doing what they could to prevent venereal diseases. In her impressive thirteen year career Jean O’Hara never was diagnosed with a venereal disease. She said that the “methods controlling these diseases by the Army and Navy authorities are probably as good as could be devised.”⁶⁶ The stations were directly outside the brothel houses so the men, and women, had easy access to medical testing right after the service was provided. Doctors used colloidal silver cream to generally treat anyone who tested positive, but the cream could also be purchased at any drug store on the island.⁶⁷ Arsenic and bismuth drugs were used to specifically cure syphilis while sulfa and penicillin treated gonorrhea.⁶⁸ The prostitutes of Honolulu’s Vice District were subjected to routine checkups, which cost \$13 and were paid for independently by each girl, which involved a blood and culture test. If she tested positive she had to be

⁶⁴ Mowat, Olive. *Five Hundred Men to a Girl*. Dye, Robert P. *Hawaii Chronicles II I: World War Two in Hawaii from the Pages of Paradise in the Pacific*. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2000. ProQuest Ebook Central. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cedarcrest-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3413028>. Created from cedarcrest-ebooks on 2018-07-05 13:04:49.

⁶⁵ Greer, Richard A. *Dousing Honolulu's Red Lights* 191

⁶⁶ O’Hara, Jean. 7

⁶⁷ Chernin, Ted

⁶⁸ Rose, Rebecca J. 61

hospitalized for two weeks, again paid for out of the girls own pocket. Not only were the women tested, but they devised a way to field test the men who visited them. “The routine was standard... I think the girls could diagnose clap better than most doctors at the time. She’d have a way of squeezing it that, if there was anything in there, she’d find it. Then she’d wash it off with a clean wash cloth.”⁶⁹

This system worked well, as long as everyone followed the rules. In 1943, 120 of the 250 prostitutes were hospitalized for a form of venereal disease.⁷⁰ O’Hara recalls a fellow patriotute who tested positive for gonorrhea and was forced to keep working by the madam because she was too popular to take two weeks off, infecting several men in the process. In another instance O’Hara remembered one woman getting tested and being forced to work that night instead of waiting for the results. Over 100 men were infected within three days.

With how many men the *patriotutes* saw on a daily basis it is easy to conclude that there was a vast amount of cash floating around the brothels at any given time. Due to the women using aliases and the commandments stating they could not own property, in this case a bank box, or wire money back to the mainland the women held onto all the cash. Once theft became a problem the women looked for ways to invest their earnings. Some bought jewelry or clothes, others bought war bonds. The women of Hotel Street “had been willing participants in war-bond drives.”⁷¹ What better way than to ensure that the men will get paid, therefore using their services, and win the war than to buy war-bonds. One madam took it upon herself to invest a great deal toward the United States military. She bought over \$132,000 in war bonds and

⁶⁹ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *The First Strange Place* 104

⁷⁰ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. “Prostitute on Strike: The Women of Hotel Street during WW2” *WWII Hotel Street*. Pdf. <http://jackiewhiting.net/HonorsUS/Labor/WWII%20Hotel%20Street.pdf>.

⁷¹ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *Prostitute on Strike* 437

encouraged her workers to do the same. This selfless service received national recognition when the Secretary of Treasurer, Henry Morgenthau, presented the madam with a special certificate for her gallant and patriotic donation to the war effort.⁷²

The *patriotutes* financially carried the war effort, but they also did a great deal for the civil rights issues as well. Oahu is a diverse island where the natives are of color. The small town southern soldiers and sailors were not fans of this new society where men of color were of equal status or where all the prostitutes were of color. This is why mainland girls were such a commodity.⁷³ To appease the military men the brothels of Hotel Street instituted a two door system, one for whites and one for local men. “This segregated system, in a city where segregation was not commonplace, was aimed at the servicemen. Many were southern and raised on racist beliefs... Because the district was rough, and the men likely to be drunk and easily moved to violence, segregation was deemed the safest policy.”⁷⁴ Soon this separate but equal system was lost and only white service men were served at a majority of brothels, though some went back to a one door policy for anyone willing to pay. “Even though *haole* servicemen disliked the idea of a colored man sharing the same woman, they enjoyed the racial variety of women working in the brothels.”⁷⁵ The majority wanted the white ‘girl next door’, but that did not stop the men from lusting after an exotic woman in the brothels too. The Bronx rooms, one of the bigger brothels, employed twelve white mainland women and thirteen women of different ethnicities. Japanese and Hawaiian were the dominant minorities but various other pacific people were represented as well.⁷⁶

⁷² Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. Prostitute on Strike 437

⁷³ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. Prostitute on Strike

⁷⁴ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. Prostitute on Strike 433

⁷⁵ Rose, Rebecca J. 32

⁷⁶ Rose, Rebecca J.

Prostitution additionally addressed sexism in the 1940s. The entire system in Honolulu was operated by women. The owners of the houses were often women of Asian decent. The madams were any woman brassy enough to keep the prostitutes and GIs organized. The prostitutes were any woman willing to volunteer and travel to the island. Even the door keepers, maids, and suppliers were women.⁷⁷ “While the brothels existed for men, women controlled access” to the entire system.⁷⁸ This newfound control was something the women were not willing to give up and constantly sought out more power financially, politically, and socially which is evident in the strike organized after Pearl Harbor. “In [the strike], she asserted her right to freedom of movement and to adequate police protection, basing her claims on a traditional liberal concept of citizenship... The strike was not for better pay but for better treatment, for fuller rights of citizenship.”⁷⁹

On top of everything that the *patriotutes* did outside of the borders of the red light district their role was still to raise morale. Chinatown itself did what it could to assist the women with this daunting task by offering “pool, pinball, and other games, along with bars, diners, ice cream stands, and opportunities to have one’s photograph taken with a stunning hula girl⁸⁰” on a daily basis to entice the men to come to town for wholesome fun.⁸¹ Soldiers and war workers found themselves spending all free hours in the ‘colorful’ downtown area of Chinatown visiting the bars, tattoo shops, brothels, YMCA, and all the other events the red light district had to offer.⁸²

⁷⁷ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. Prostitute on Strike

⁷⁸ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. Prostitute on Strike

⁷⁹ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. Prostitute on Strike 437

⁸⁰ Photograph included in appendix

⁸¹ Rose, Rebecca J. 27

⁸² Chernin, Ted. 204

A saying to best summarize Chinatown is it is a place to “get stewed, screwed, and tattooed” in only a couple of hours.⁸³

To the great amusement of all, sometimes men (and on far fewer occasions, women) thought they were in line for some other scarce commodity and instead found themselves at the brothel doors. A favorite wartime joke (and the joke was played out for real) told of the little old lady halfway up the line who thought she was on her way to a rare bottle of mainland scotch.⁸⁴

Of course, the biggest lure was the idea of intimacy with a woman. From 1941 to 1945 there were at least twenty registered brothels at all times with no less than 250 registered “entertainers” a year. It was the chance to visit the women that truly brought the 30,000 men to the vice district each day.⁸⁵ “It was the brothels that gave Hotel Street its dark magic. The prostitutes offered men sex, simple and uncomplicated. For many of the boys, that was enough.”⁸⁶

For the soldiers who needed more the prostitutes obliged. When not on the clock, and sometimes when the men finished early, the prostitutes became the men’s de facto therapist.

Most men didn’t come to Hotel Street just for sex. To many, it seemed the only place to go to break the routine or to find some kind of human exchange. Hotel Street Harry, the columnist for the *Midpacifican*- the Army newspaper that served the Central Pacific- wrote week after week about the district. He called it the “Street of Lonely Hearts.” “I don’t think there is a worse feeling in the world than to be lonesome in a crowd,” he wrote. “The street is filled with men whose hearts are aching.”⁸⁷

Hotel Street women learned to listen with open ears and hearts to the problems of the service members they served. “The boys talk of the families, of the girls back home, and their

⁸³ Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson. 132

⁸⁴ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *The First Strange Place* 101

⁸⁵ Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson.

⁸⁶ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *The First Strange Place* 97

⁸⁷ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *The First Strange Place* 97

hopes and plans for the future. They all have futures. Sometimes they look our girls over and say “I have a kid sister just your age.”⁸⁸ Ken Burch, a soldier from Oklahoma, explains the reality of the situation when he states that he “knew that some of the young men going up the steps to the brothels would die, never having had any other woman than the three-dollar whore they had bought while drunk in the broad daylight in Honolulu.”⁸⁹ Hearing of home lives also makes the prostitutes home sick but they must remember that the men are living much worse lives once they leave the island to fight the war.

Our girls have faced life and death. Not life and death separated by a stretch of years. But by a trip to Tarawa or Okinawa. We watched tight-lipped. But out of their hurt they carry on for the boys who are still here. Not the same boys, but the same service. They know firsthand something of the tragedy of war.⁹⁰

Being a prostitute is not an easy job no matter when or where a sex worker decides to service clients. Brothel prostitutes in the 1940's in Hawaii may have been in the most dire circumstances however. Jean O'Hara knew all too well the true price that was paid to be a victory girl in paradise. Before getting paid the prostitutes had to pay the ultimate price to society: their dignity and self-respect.⁹¹ “She must then harden herself against the disrespect, abuse, vulgar insults and disgusting demands of her clientele.”⁹² Soldiers, sailors, and marines were often intoxicated from the many bars in the red light district once they finally reached the front of the brothel lines. This liquid courage often gave the men the gusto to pick fights with the prostitutes when they felt they did not get a full three minutes' worth of pleasure, regardless of the fact that they were the one who finished the act. *Patriotutes* also paid financially. These

⁸⁸ Mowat, Olive.307

⁸⁹ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *The First Strange Place* 97

⁹⁰ Mowat, Olive.309

⁹¹ O'Hara, Jean. *Honolulu Harlot: An Expose of Honolulu Vice Conditions* 14

⁹² O'Hara, Jean. *Honolulu Harlot: An Expose of Honolulu Vice Conditions* 14

women paid higher fines, taxes, and rent than almost anyone on the island. Despite prostitution being illegal, the women were forced to pay federal income taxes and gross income taxes.⁹³ Even doctors charged the women a special raised rate.⁹⁴

“Lastly, the women pay with their broken bodies. Serving over 100 men a day for long grueling hours every day for a minimum of six months physically and mentally takes its toll on the body. The ill-treatment from the police and madams only adds to the physical breaking of their bodies. Jean O’Hara tells of a time when the price to work was too high to continue. O’Hara knew “of a case in which the girl involved jumped over the Pali⁹⁵ due to overwork and an over dose of dope!”⁹⁶ Historians can tell that the girls were desperate for an escape from reality when they were willing to pay \$10 for a single shot of dope on top of everything they already paid for.⁹⁷ Prostitutes “sought distance” from their abusive life and ill-reputed work through shooting dope or morphine and by smoking opium. The drugs were supplied by the madams to keep the women numb, addicted and attached to the brothels for as long as possible.⁹⁸

O’Hara had her own escape, her husband. Late one night at around 11:00 p.m. as a couple they decided she should leave the brothels and that life for a while to get off the vice squads most wanted list. On her way out the madam stopped her and reminded her of the Ten Commandments, prostitutes cannot leave the brothels after 10:30 p.m. The officer called was

⁹³ The Madams to try to stay in a lower tax bracket themselves would record the prostitute’s earnings as lower than their actual wage. Even with these graciously altered numbers the prostitutes were still in the upper tax brackets paying back “three digit plus” numbers each pay period in O’Hara, Jean. Honolulu Harlot: An Expose of Honolulu Vice Conditions 43

⁹⁴ O’Hara, Jean. Honolulu Harlot: An Expose of Honolulu Vice Conditions 14

⁹⁵ Pali is the extremely high cliffs overlooking the water where King Kamehameha’s warriors were victorious and united the Hawaiian islands as one nation in the 18th century in "WWII in Hawaii: Beyond Pearl Harbor."

⁹⁶ O’Hara, Jean. 14

⁹⁷ O’Hara, Jean.

⁹⁸ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. Prostitute on Strike

Sergeant Robert Kennedy.⁹⁹ Kennedy “was a big, powerful bruiser; he stood over six feet tall, and his 220 pounds were all muscle.”¹⁰⁰ O’Hara was just over five feet tall and barely weighed 120 pounds so she was no physical match to fight Kennedy to get out the door. The Harlots solution was to use her words. When looking back on the night she remarked, “Well, I have a temper- the Irish in me boiled. I told him that I’d do as I darn pleased, that I was a citizen and a taxpayers, and that I had violated no laws. I had, I said, only violated his dictations.”¹⁰¹ This was not something the madam or the sergeant wanted to hear this late at night and the argument became a full out brawl. “Enraged by her sass, Kennedy punched her in the face and drove her to the floor, where he began kicking her in the ribs until she passed out.... Kennedy dragged O’Hara to the patrol wagon by her hair and threw her in the back.”¹⁰²

In the end Jean O’Hara broke two ribs, her nose, and her jaw. To top the night off her red satin pajamas were ripped. She was arrested on multiple charges; resisting arrest, assault and battery, and using profanity. O’Hara was held in the police station for three days before receiving medical care and then released shortly after as the charges against her were dropped when the police realized her lawyer meant business.¹⁰³ Chief Gabrielson, after finding out O’Hara planned to press charges for abuse, threatened that she “might find [herself] falling over the Pali someday” if she kept causing him trouble.¹⁰⁴

Lucky for most *patriotutes* though, their prison sentence to the brothels of paradise only lasted six months. This rule was in place because “few women had the stamina, will, or desire to

⁹⁹ O’Hara, Jean. 32

¹⁰⁰ Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson. 130

¹⁰¹ O’Hara, Jean. 29

¹⁰² Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson.

¹⁰³ O’Hara, Jean.

¹⁰⁴ O’Hara, Jean. 33

keep at the trade, uninterrupted, for the duration of the war”¹⁰⁵ and because it was believed that if the prostitutes stayed in the red light district for a period longer than six months “she got to know too much” and was a security risk as she would have seen atrocities and been able to name those involved at the top of the command chain. Not only were the girls kicked out of the brothels but they were banned from Hawaii itself for a year’s time.¹⁰⁶ O’Hara was one of the few who became exceptions to this six month time limit as she spent the entirety of the war in the red light district of Honolulu.

Meeting the prostitutes at the piers on their first days set the tone for their lives on the island, intensive police reign and being treated inhumanly. Police brutality was not a laughing matter for the *patriotutes* of Honolulu. “A life so filled with insults, sordid surroundings, disgusting diseases and loathsome visitors that no attempt at portrayal can succeed in placing before you all the horrible experiences of this worst of all money rackets.”¹⁰⁷ The setting has nothing on the police who treated the women like worthless street rats. O’Hara described the police department’s Vice Squad as “rotten to the core” for exploiting the girls’ situation. Not only did they take advantage of the women’s’ specialized skills but they also got “rich from [the] houses of prostitution, and the inmates of those houses.”¹⁰⁸ Police who steal, physically abuse, promote, and partake in illegal prostitution do not sound like the law abiding good guys they were made out to be to outsiders of the red light district and Hotel Street. After all, the police officers had their duty to get to know the women working in their city on a personal level. Once the shops closed up for the morning the vice squad would invite themselves into the brothels to be “entertained by the girl of their choice” for as long as they pleased free of charge. The officers

¹⁰⁵ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *The First Strange Place* 100

¹⁰⁶ O’Hara, Jean. 19

¹⁰⁷ O’Hara, Jean.

¹⁰⁸ O’Hara, Jean. 15

called this policy to ensure the women were fully capable of treating our service men to a good time.¹⁰⁹

The worst part of the Vice Squad's situation as far as the general population was concerned was that the "taxpayers' money [was] being spent on a Vice Squad that practically [ran] a harem, in the most literal sense of the word."¹¹⁰ Honolulu's vice squad collected nearly \$25,000 a month in 'dues' that they forced from the madams. Madams were forced to pay the squad \$50 dollars per girl in the house each month as a thank you for letting them work in this illegal and immoral profession. When they refused to pay the money was simply stolen from them later.¹¹¹ The money paid for the protection from federal charges that the police could easily prove any madam or prostitute guilty of. No one can describe the egregious nature of the Honolulu Police Department under Chief William A. Gabrielson than Jean O'Hara, the most hated prostitute by the vice squad. O'Hara shapes the vice squad as follows, "like the ravages of venereal disease or the crawling curse of cancer, these cankerous blights on decent society must be cut out of Honolulu city government just as fast as the axe can be made to cut their necks."¹¹² She continues to describe the life of a prostitute as having "no more freedom than a prisoner" due to Gabrielson's "stringent rules" and ruthless brutality.¹¹³ The worst and most accurate description of the Chief and his goon squad is that for any woman working in a brothel the "Honolulu City Government seems worse than the most despicable of the Axis Dictatorships" that the men fought over seas.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ O'Hara, Jean. 27

¹¹⁰ O'Hara, Jean.

¹¹¹ O'Hara, Jean.

¹¹² O'Hara, Jean. 15

¹¹³ O'Hara, Jean. 16

¹¹⁴ O'Hara, Jean. 16

The Nazi like mob mentality allowed the vice squad to be untouchable and free to do as they pleased. O'Hara was one of the few, if not the only, that stood up to them. After her near death beating and losing her favorite satin lingerie Jean O'Hara did, in fact, press charges against Gabrielson's vice squad and the case went public.¹¹⁵ The same day her prized and flashy Lincoln Zephyr sedan went missing. A few hours after her car was reported stolen Gabrielson phoned the brothel and requested to speak to the Harlot. His message warned "that he would see to it that [O'Hara] got [her] car back, if [she] would drop the charges" filed against him and his men.¹¹⁶ She agreed and was asked to sign her full name, Betty Jean O'Hara, on the report stating all charges are dropped before her car was returned to the same spot it was taken from. O'Hara, being a person of empathy and sass, additionally requested an apology from the sergeant for beating her, ripping her favorite red satin, and stealing her car.¹¹⁷

It is no exaggeration to state that Jean O'Hara was wanted dead or alive by Chief of Police Gabrielson. "She was a target for every cheap grafter and stand-in thief"¹¹⁸ off the leaked information from the chief that the women did not own bank accounts due to the "commandments" and stashed the money in their rooms. O'Hara recalled when a \$3,000 diamond watch and \$300 cash were stolen from her personal room along with valuable jade jewelry and other flashy clothing items. Even her Lincoln Zephyr was damaged when the flood lights were stolen, and the brothel safe was taken in its entirety. Nothing was ever returned or looked into when she reported the ransacking to the police department.¹¹⁹ To top it all off the police even tried to have Jean O'Hara framed for murder.

¹¹⁵ Chernin, Ted. 214

¹¹⁶ O'Hara, Jean. 37

¹¹⁷ O'Hara, Jean.

¹¹⁸ O'Hara, Jean. 16

¹¹⁹ O'Hara, Jean. 44

While driving in Pacific Heights with a girlfriend, a local gambler who was having a fight with Jean's passenger, made a grab for the car door. (He hoped to pull the women out and teach them a thing or two.) The women sped on. The HPD convinced the gambler to press charges against O'Hara for attempted murder and a string of other charges.¹²⁰

Thankfully for O'Hara the jury for the murder trial quickly decided that the charges were false and returned a verdict of not guilty on all charges.¹²¹ "O'Hara had caused enough trouble for the Honolulu Police Department that officials did everything in their power to make life in Honolulu impossible for her. [On top of everything else] she was ticketed for speeding and lost her license; she was arrested for disturbing the peace at the Moana Hotel and sentenced to six months in jail, though she only served four."¹²² This prison sentence would be a pivotal point in her life as it was when she decided to write her expose and send it to Washington D.C. to copyright and publish it. This published expose entitled "Honolulu Harlot" is the only known account of a prostitute's life first hand. There are other documents from survivors that called Oahu home, but soldiers and war workers do not know or write of the inner workings and abuse that prostitutes faced in the 1940's.¹²³

The final straw for O'Hara, and the reason why she decided to write a second edition to her story.¹²⁴ Jean O'Hara's husband was friends with some high ranking pilots and while hosting the pilots they got an emergency call to report to Hickam field. O'Hara offered to drive the men so they could go straight to work. While driving she was pulled over twice and ticketed for speeding, which she admits she was doing. The officer turned to the aviators and asked "what

¹²⁰ Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson. 135

¹²¹ Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson. 136

¹²² Rose, Rebecca J. 58

¹²³ Rose, Rebecca J.

¹²⁴ This second copy was never found or published in O'Hara, Jean.

they were doing with a woman like [O'Hara]."¹²⁵ After the second time of being pulled over the harlot had enough and did not stop for the third officer on motorcycle.

Now multiple police surrounded the Lincoln Zephyr and commenced firing on the vehicle and its passengers. When the pilot in the front seat ducked down and did not get back up the police stopped firing, fearing they killed the high ranking pilot. Once all cars stopped the officers approached and relieved said to the aviator "We thought we killed you, and we were scared! It wouldn't have made much difference if we had of killed her. She would have been just another whore out of the way and less trouble for the police department later."¹²⁶ Of course the high tempered O'Hara pressed charges and with the pilot as a witness she was guaranteed to win the case. The law stated that officers can only fire in a felony charge, not a speeding case and potentially injuring the passengers of the car was reckless endangerment from the officer. Miraculously the speeding tickets and lawyer fees were taken care of and O'Hara never had to serve time for speeding and the other three charges she was given that day.¹²⁷

Nevertheless, O'Hara did not allow herself or the fellow women of Hotel Street to be pushed around, physically or by the commandments, for long. In fact, they marched out of the brothels to strike on August 28 of 1942.¹²⁸ "This [strike] assumed such proportions that the Army decided to return the 'jurisdiction' over this 'function' to the local police commission... At this point the city of Honolulu was treated to the spectacle of a three weeks' strike by prostitutes."¹²⁹ This was a courageous risk as the *patriotutes* had no public allies to support their strike and

¹²⁵ O'Hara, Jean 40

¹²⁶ O'Hara, Jean 40-41

¹²⁷ O'Hara Jean 41

¹²⁸ Rose, Rebecca J. 52

¹²⁹ Anthony, Joseph Garner. 40

could easily be deported from the island.¹³⁰ The main goal was to be able to live outside of the brothels and enjoy paradise when not working. Higher pay, less restrictions on places to go, and the ability to communicate with the mainland were also on the women's agenda during the strike of 1942.¹³¹ "They 'picketed the police station and the office of the military governor with placards announcing their grievances.' After twenty-two days, the women won the opportunity to live outside the district and allowed to visit the beaches, but they were still denied a raise. "Provost Martial Frank Steers learned about the price increase and claimed that it was wrong to ask 'fighting men' to pay such high prices. Steers fixed prices at three dollars per date claiming that, 'the price of meat is still three dollars'."¹³² The strike showed resistance to the existing power structure and proved what women could accomplish when they banded together."¹³³ Having white prostitutes parading their "public presence and vocal demands called into question all the associations of race and gender and the ideology of the purity of white women to be defended against the sexual threat of colored races that were implicit and sometimes explicit in underpinning Hawaii's social structure."¹³⁴

The prostitutes' strike was only one small and indirect part of a larger movement toward a more pluralistic postwar society in Hawaii. But it is especially significant because it brought together issues of race and gender in such a way that it worked to undermine the ideology of racial superiority. White prostitutes demanded full rights of citizenship, and while the very public fact of their race had, in some small way, helped to undermine Hawaii's racial hierarchy, their race was not sufficient to guarantee their rights. Instead, the public power they were able to display for a short while in wartime Hawaii depended on the utility the federal authorities found in them.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *Prostitute on Strike* 437

¹³¹ Greer, Richard A. *Dousing Honolulu's Red Lights*

¹³² Rose, Rebecca J. 31

¹³³ Rose, Rebecca J. 52

¹³⁴ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *Prostitute on Strike* 439

¹³⁵ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *Prostitute on Strike* 439

However, the women did not win on their own accord. After twenty-two days of abstinence during the strike the military stepped in to encourage the police to meet the demands of the women so that the situation did not heighten to include a riot from the testosterone filled service men who needed a physical, and sexual, release. No newspaper or magazine reported a single article on the great prostitution strike and the women's triumph over the men that needed them.¹³⁶

Before and after the strike "Honolulu [was] still a heaven to the prostitutes, as the earnings here cannot be touched anywhere else in the United States"¹³⁷ or abroad. The average prostitute working in a regulated brothel in Hawaii during World War II made \$4,000 a month working every night. Popular women, like Jean O'Hara, made almost double that amount in a month. O'Hara confessed that she would make upwards of \$300 a night at one point in her career while working at the Midway Hotel.¹³⁸ In a year prostitutes on average brought home \$30,000-\$40,000 after everything was paid, or stolen. This equates to \$456,000 to \$608,000 a year if the women worked in 2018. Madams earned upwards and over \$150,000 a year if she ran a successful brothel.¹³⁹ "To put that into perspective that comes to about \$2,280,000 a year in today's dollars."¹⁴⁰

Brothels themselves made a net profit of \$25,000 a month after all fees were paid or stolen which is equivalent and in some cases higher than what factories profited in the same time frame.¹⁴¹ Jean O'Hara managed to not only make money but invest it. She owned over \$100,000 worth of beach front property in Waikiki and Honolulu. Some historians and friends of the harlot

¹³⁶ Greer, Richard A. Dousing Honolulu's Red Lights

¹³⁷ O'Hara, Jean. 16

¹³⁸ O'Hara, Jean. 30, 42

¹³⁹ Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson.

¹⁴⁰ Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson 129

¹⁴¹ O'Hara, Jean.

claim her jewel collect can rival the price tag of her houses.¹⁴² “I marvel that I withstood the abuses and shameful contacts which are an unavoidable part of life as a prostitute.... All the money in the world could not compensate for the insults, indignities and lustful abuse of men”¹⁴³ O’Hara states.

Dr. G. Guy Schram, assistant surgeon that knew the *patriotutes* situation well stated for Time magazine:

The house is invariably a rickety, creaky affair, its furnishings absolutely barren but for the walls lined with unfinished hard benches. The odors are dank, musty and reminiscent of the Lysol vapors of a lavatory. Heading the corridor of cubicles stands a money-booth barely encompassing the fat form of a madam. Splashed over with a jarring array of tawdry cosmetics, sporting an overweening bearing she rules the benighted roost with an iron hand. Woe betide the drunken, the rowdy or he who would slip by the toil-cage without the ceremony of plunking down three dollars. Dozens of men, sprawling on the benches, along the stairways and on the floors, an indescribable look in their faces, men strangely silent and distant to one another who under normal circumstances are talkative and friendly. The eternal wait over, the cubicle is entered. The upper third of its walls, made of flimsy cardboard-like material is wide open. One such slither [sliver] of a wall serves two cubicles; no barrier exists to sound waves so that the appearance of privacy is little better than a gesture.¹⁴⁴

The thin curtain walls and empty rooms allowed for a mass production assembly line fashion for how the men were seen by their favorite women. Another soldier remembered the room with all the action as “bare except for a dangling lightbulb, a single cot, a table with a washbowl and a wastebasket” and explicitly remembered the sweaty sexy smell of cleaner that could be sensed from outside the room.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Greer, Richard A. Dousing Honolulu's Red Lights

¹⁴³ O’Hara, Jean.

¹⁴⁴ Rose, Rebecca J. 37

¹⁴⁵ Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson. 133

“Most of the Brothels used what was called a “bullring” setup. The bull ring consisted of three rooms. In one room, a man undressed, in a second the prostitute engaged her customer, in a third a man who had finished put his clothes back on. In the brothels, time was money. The prostitutes wanted to move the men in and out as quickly as possible.”¹⁴⁶

She’s lay on her back and get you on top of her so fast, you wouldn’t even know you’d come up there on your own power. She’d grind so that you almost felt like you had nothing to do with it. Well, after that, she had you. She could make it go off as quickly as she wanted to... and she didn’t waste any time, I’ll tell you... I’d say the whole thing, from the time you got in the room until the time you came didn’t take three minutes.¹⁴⁷

The bullpen system allowed for three minutes, in which the men paid three dollars for their time. One dollar went to the madam, two dollars went to the girls so that they could generously tip the laundry, maid, and doctors who allowed the brothels to operate successfully.¹⁴⁸ It may seem impossible for the women to make money having to split two dollars four ways but when 100 men were knocking down the doors for sixteen hours the girls could make ample amounts of money. After the attack on Pearl Harbor though the hours of operation were forced to change because a curfew was implemented for anyone under the age of 16, like some of the prostitutes were. They had to be in their homes before midnight. Now while the brothel was their home it was also the workplace and the madams did not need any more of a reason to have the vice squad intervene.¹⁴⁹ Originally the brothels were open from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., but after the attack on Pearl Harbor a blackout curfew was implemented and the brothel operating hours changed to 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *The First Strange Place* 103-104

¹⁴⁷ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. *The First Strange Place* 104

¹⁴⁸ Rose, Rebecca J.

¹⁴⁹ Hegarty, Marilyn E. 1998. "Patriot or Prostitute" 119

¹⁵⁰ Rose, Rebecca J.

As the war came to a close, so did Hotel Street. The Allies were winning the war so spirits ran high. Once the war was over a majority of the soldiers and sailors returned to their families and left the island of Oahu forever. On Victory over Japan day the brothels were officially closed with the release of a written mandate stating doors must be closed that night. Upon getting the good news “flashes of the girls here and there: one wore a short red apron, a short-short shirt and a pair of cowboy riding boots; one shouted “whoopie” when told she could leave the house; another one said, “I see here that this paper says we can’t practice prostitution any more. Heck, I don’t practice, I’m an expert.”¹⁵¹

When the brothels closed down places like Club Hubba Hubba opened their doors to fill the void for the men remaining in Hawaii who missed their weekly visits with the prostitutes. These bars showcased live nude shows which employed many of the former prostitutes who wished to remain in paradise.¹⁵² Club Hubba Hubba was given the ok by men like Gabrielson because he did not “want to see [prostitutes] reform for two reasons: first, because as a prostitute, you are a big money maker, and, secondly, because you know too much and as a reformed citizen are too dangerous.”¹⁵³ Most did reform though, and lives the rest of their lives with families on the mainland reminiscing about the good old days of Hawaii.

With her expansive arrest record and outspoken personality it would be hard to imagine a woman like O’Hara as a regular old house wife or factory worker. “The sensational Jean O’Hara Noriger disappeared from the public eye. Amazingly, historians have been unable to find out

¹⁵¹ Greer, Richard A. Dousing Honolulu's Red Lights 197

¹⁵² Memminger, Charles. "The Last Days of Club Hubba Hubba." Honolulu Magazine, November 03, 2011. Accessed August 01, 2018. www.honolulumagazine.com.

¹⁵³ O’Hara, Jean.

what happened to Jean after she left the Rex... Historians have been unable to find any record of her life after Hotel Street... There are no marriage, divorce, or death records.”¹⁵⁴

Jean O’Hara gained popularity with the Federal Bureau of Investigation when she sent her expose to Washington D.C. for copyright in August of 1944. The same month “J. E. Thornton was the special agent in charge of the FBI’s Honolulu office... Honolulu prostitution was a ‘big racket largely in the hands of ex-convicts.’”¹⁵⁵ This agent came to O’Hara’s door asking questions and paid a visit to the brothel and police station as well. In November of 1944 O’Hara’s story was officially published and released to the world. There is no trace of O’Hara, or her husband, after November of 1944. Countless hours have been spent searching labor records, arrest records, marriage and death records of Hawaii, San Francisco, and Chicago searching for O’Hara to appear.¹⁵⁶ It is like she just vanished. One theory is that the Chief Gabrielson and his vice squad finally had enough of her Irish temper causing trouble and threw her over the Pali. Others believe she escaped the life of adventure and moved somewhere brand new.

“Their story is a fascinating window on the political struggle, economic velocity, gender turn-about, and social chaos created by war time necessities. The women of Hotel Street fought hard to keep what they felt they had earned and they enlisted an unlikely group of allies- including the provost marshal and the military governor of Hawaii- in their efforts not only to make money but to gain respectability and security. They made it their business to gain what control they could from the men who needed them.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson. 136-137

¹⁵⁵ Greer, Richard A. Dousing Honolulu's Red Lights 192

¹⁵⁶ Upon searching public records in both cities and Oahu and Maui there is no record of her maiden or married name, Noriger. Records were search from March 2017 through November 2018 with the help of Cedar Crest College, the University of Hawaii at Manoa and the Center for Labor Education and Research at West Oahu.

¹⁵⁷ Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. The First Strange Place 98

Appendix

1. Photograph of Jean O'Hara
2. The May Act legislation
3. Ten commandments of prostitution
4. New Senator Hotel propaganda
5. Venereal disease propaganda posters (6)
6. map of brothel locations
7. list of houses, addresses, and madams
8. Hawaiian Pin up Girl
9. Arcade photo with Hula Girls



Hatfield, Elaine, and Richard L. Rapson. 2011. Flimflam artists: true tales of cults, crackpots, cranks, cretins, crooks, creeps, con artists, and charlatans. [Bloomington, Ind.?]: Xlibris Corp

The May Act
 Military and Naval establishments —
 Prostitution prohibited near
 Chapter 287— 1st session
 [Public law 163— 77th congress] [h. r. 2475]

An Act to prohibit prostitution within such reasonable distance of military and/or naval establishments as the Secretaries of War and/or Navy shall determine to be needful to the efficiency, health, and welfare of the Army and/or Navy.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That:

Until May 15 , 1945 , it shall be unlawful, within such reasonable distance of any military or naval camp, station, fort, post, yard, base, cantonment, training or mobilization place as the Secretaries of War and/or Navy shall determine to be needful to the efficiency, health, and welfare of the Army and/or Navy, and shall designate and publish in general orders or bulletins, to engage in prostitution or to aid or abet prostitution or to procure or solicit for the purpose of prostitution, or to keep or set up a house of ill fame, brothel or bawdy house or to receive any person for purposes of lewdness, assignation, or prostitution into any vehicle, conveyance, place, structure, or building, or to permit any person to remain for the purpose of lewdness, assignation, or prostitution in any vehicle, conveyance, place, structure, or building or to lease, or rent, or contract to lease or rent any vehicle, conveyance, place, structure, or building, or part thereof, knowing or with good reason to know that it is intended to be used for any of the purposes herein prohibited; and any person, corporation, partnership, or association violating the provisions of this act shall, unless otherwise punishable under the Articles of War or the Articles for the Government of the Navy, be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and be punished by a fine of not more than \$ 1 , 000 , or by imprisonment for not more than one year, or by both such fine and imprisonment, and any person subject to military or naval law violating this Act shall be punished as provided by the Articles of War or the Articles for the Government of the Navy, and the Secretaries of War and of the Navy and the Federal Security Administrator are each hereby authorized and directed to take such steps as they deem necessary to suppress and prevent the violation thereof, and to accept the cooperation of the authorities of States and their counties, districts, and other political subdivisions in carrying out the purposes of this Act: Provided, That nothing in this Act shall be construed as conferring on the personnel of the War or Navy Department or the Federal Security Agency any authority to make criminal investigations, searches, seizures, or arrests of civilians charged with violations of this Act.

Approved, July 11 , 1941 .

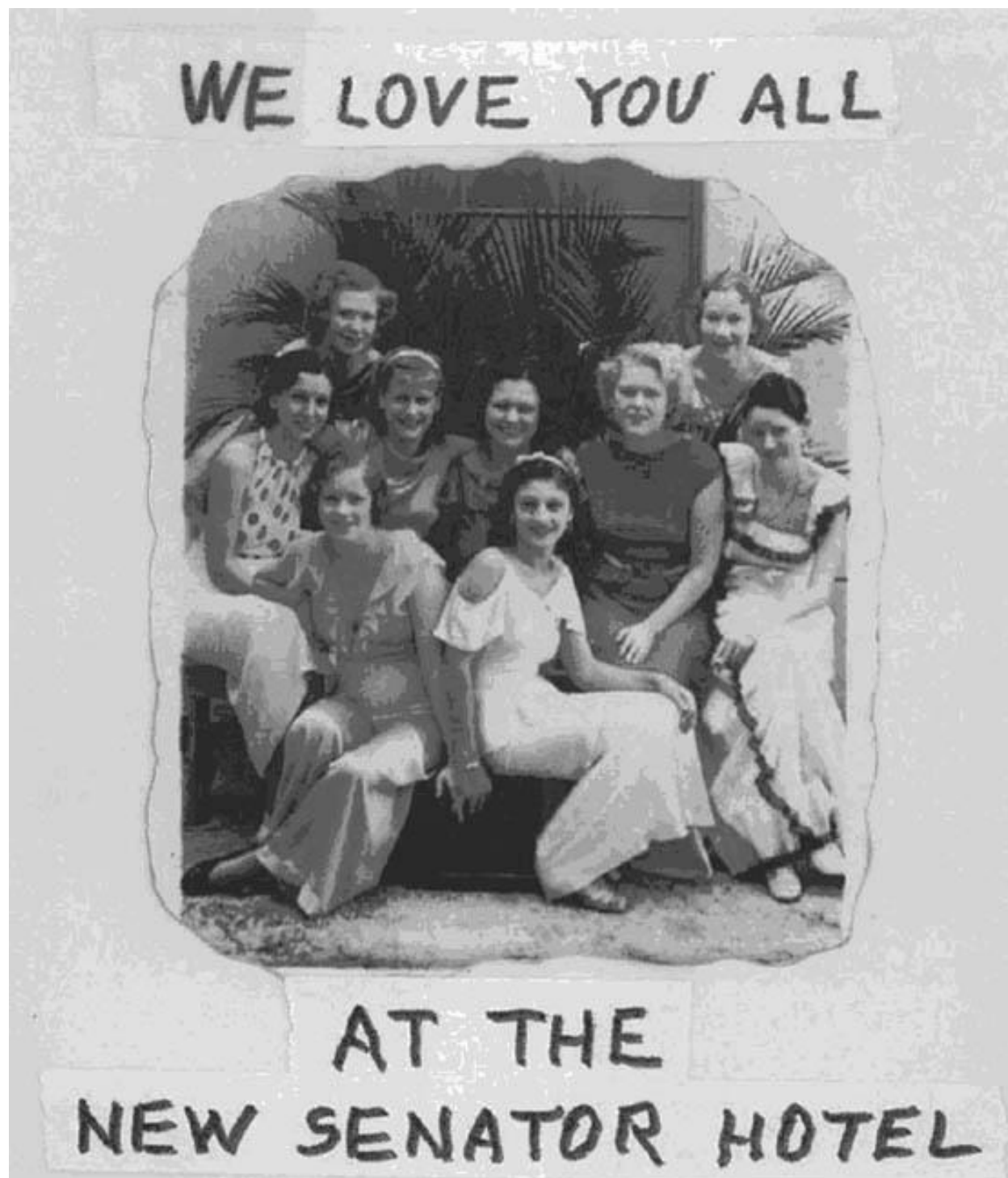
Hegarty, Marilyn. Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes : The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II, New York University Press, 2007. ProQuest Ebook Central,

Ten Commandments of Prostitution

1. Could not visit Waikiki Beach at any time.
2. Could not patronize any bars, or the better class cafes.
3. Could not own any property.
4. Could not own an automobile.
5. Could not have a steady "boyfriend."
6. Could not be seen on the streets with any man.
7. Could not attend any dances.
8. Could not visit any Army or Navy post.
9. Could not visit a friend's apartment at any time.
10. Could not be out of the brothel after ten-thirty at night.
11. Could not marry service personnel.
12. Could not wire any money to the mainland unless we first consulted the Madame.
13. Could not take a trip to the outside islands unless we first checked out of the brothel.
14. Could not ride in the front seat of a taxicab at any time.
15. Could not check out of any brothel after ten-thirty at night.
16. Could not check out from one house to the other; we were to stay where we were put.
17. Could not visit the golf courses.
18. Could swim only at Kailua Beach.
19. Could not telephone the mainland unless we first consulted the Madame.
20. Could not ride in a taxicab with a man.

O'Hara, Jean. Honolulu Harlot: An Expose of Honolulu Vice Conditions. Hawaii, 1944.

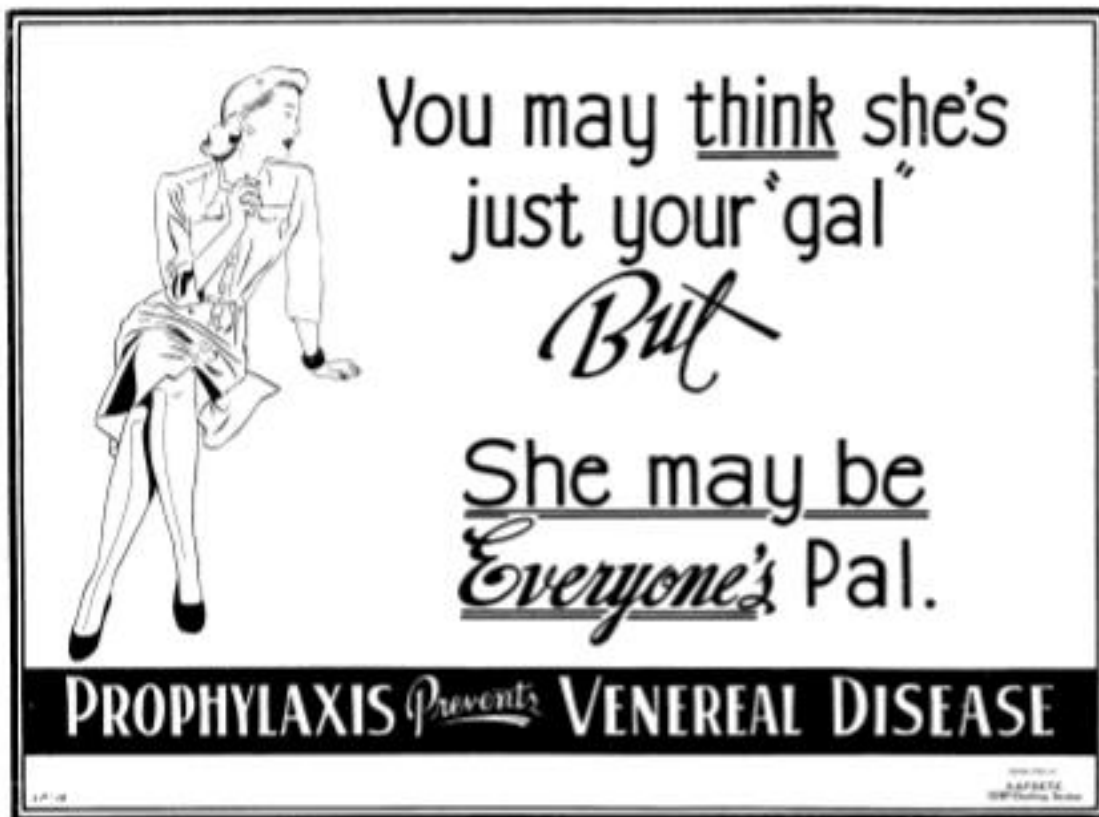
New Senator Propaganda Poster



Chernin, Ted. 2009. My Experiences in the Honolulu Chinatown Red-Light District. Honolulu, Hawaiian Historical Society. <http://hdl.handle.net/10524/228>. 208

6 Venereal Disease propaganda posters

"Reservoirs of Infection" | 71



"You may think she's just your gal . . ." Poster, 1944. Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota.

Hegarty, Marilyn. Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes : The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II, New York University Press, 2007. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cedarcrest-ebooks/detail.action?docID=866109>. Created from cedarcrest-ebooks on 2018-11-26 07:32:23.

24 | *The Long Arm of the State*

"Don't be Her pin-up boy." Poster, 1940. Artist: C. D. Batchelor.
Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota.

Hegarty, Marilyn. Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes



"A Sailor Doesn't Have to Prove He's a Man." Poster, U.S. Navy, 1942. Courtesy of National Library of Medicine/ National Institutes of Health.

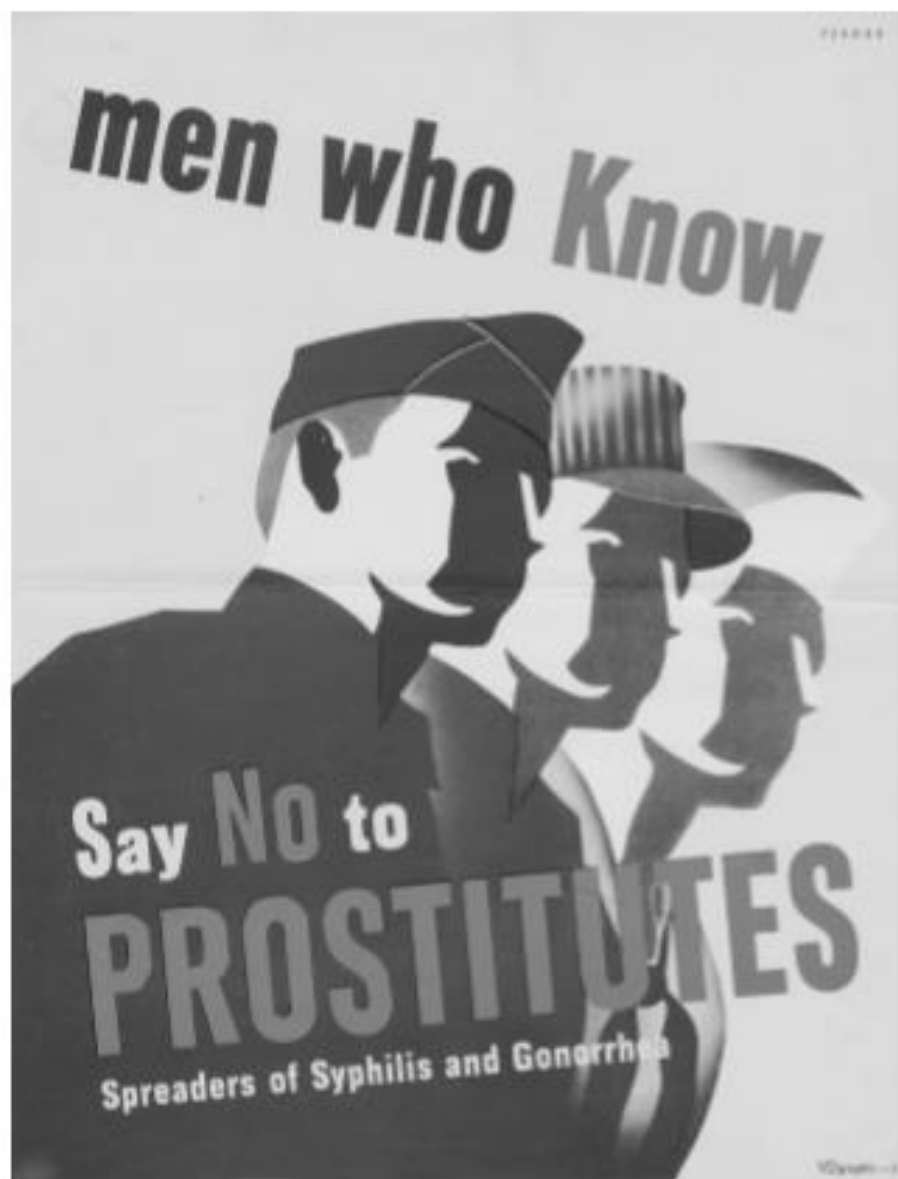
Hegarty, Marilyn. Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes



"She May look Clean . . . But . . ." Poster, ca. 1941-45. Courtesy of National Library of Medicine/National Institutes of Health.

Hegarty, Marilyn. Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes

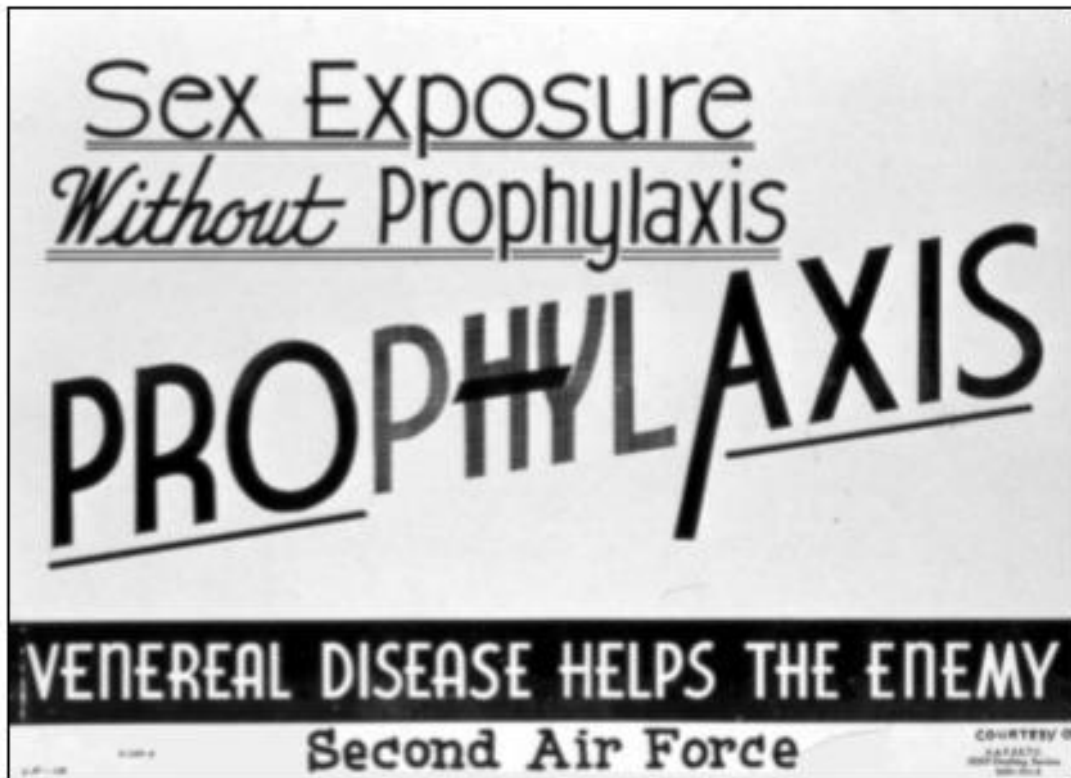
100 | *"A Buffer of Whores"*



"Men who Know Say No to PROSTITUTES: Spreaders of Syphilis and Gonorrhea." Poster, 1940. Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota.

Hegarty, Marilyn. Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes

102 | “A Buffer of Whores”



“Sex Exposure Without Prophylaxis.” Poster, U.S. Army Air Forces Training Command, 1944. Courtesy of National Library of Medicine/National Institutes of Health.

Hegarty, Marilyn. Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes

Map of the Brothels of Chinatown



FIG 1. Map of Chinatown locations of houses of prostitution during World War II, drawn by the author from memory about 1966. Letters A through K indicate movie theaters; the letter X indicates the author's "pads."

Chernin, Ted. 2009. My Experiences in the Honolulu Chinatown Red-Light District. Honolulu, Hawaiian Historical Society. <http://hdl.handle.net/10524/228>. 206

List of all Brothels and Madams in Chinatown

Table 1. Houses of Prostitution in Honolulu's Chinatown in the Early 1940s

Name	Owners	Landlady
Local Rooms (Aala Rooms) 1026-B Aala St.	Hun Yee Yei 1018 Aala St.	Mrs. Hun Yee Yei 22 girls
Aala Park Rooms (Park Rooms) 1050 Aala St.	Annie K. Wong Leong P.O. Box 1652	Mrs. Hun Yee Yei 18 girls
Bell Rooms 137 North Kukui St.	Young Kan Lum et al. 3635 Mahina Ave.	Norma Lane 7 girls
Camp Rooms 1126 Smith St.	Mendonca Trust Est. Francis Sylva, trustee	Mrs. Rebecca Paakonia 8 girls
Western Rooms 120 North Beretania St.	Wong Nin 785 Young St.	Peggy Staunton 11 girls
Cottage Hotel 1183 River St.	Chun Lai Shee et al. P.O. Box 1759	Mickey Allen 4 girls
Pacific Rooms 1130 Mauna Kea St.	Lum Yip Kee P.O. Box 1876	Frances Norman 4 girls
Rex Rooms 1145 Smith St.	Lee Yau Chong c/o Wing Coffee Co.	Molly O'Brian 5 girls
Senator Hotel 121 North Hotel St.	Lum Yip Kee P.O. Box 1876	Ruth Davis 15 girls
Midway Hotel 1243 River St.	Della Land 508 Ward St.	Patricia De Corso 10 girls
Modern Rooms 1135 Mauna Kea St.	Wong Nin 785 Young St.	Virginia Martin 6 girls
Ritz Rooms 143 North Beretania St.	Chun Lai Shee et al. P.O. Box 1759	Helen Burton 5 girls
Service Hotel 1153 Mauna Kea St.	Y. Anin 858 Kanoa Lane	Darlene Foster 12 girls
Palace Hotel 1252 Nuuanu St.	Lucille K. Snyder c/o Bishop Trust Co.	
Honolulu Rooms 347 North Beretania St.	Paul Sia Foon Au 1749 South Beretania St.	
Rainbow Hotel 1207 River St.	Kwai Lim Wong P.O. Box 1961	
Bronx Rooms 1275 River St.		Tomi Abe 5 girls
Mirror Rooms 154 North Hotel St.		
Bungalow 1166 Smith St.		
Anchor Rooms (Hotel) 57 North Pauahi St.		Mrs. Angeline Russell 6 girls

Source: Prostitution File, Governor Ingram M. Stanback Papers, AH.

Chernin, Ted. 2009. My Experiences in the Honolulu Chinatown Red-Light District. Honolulu, Hawaiian Historical Society. <http://hdl.handle.net/10524/228>. 216

Hawaiian Pin up Girl



Jim Heimann Collection/Courtesy Boyo Press

Pin-up girl, Hawaii, circa 1938.

Kearns, Landess. "Rare Vintage Photos Show WWII- Era Hawaii Like Never Before." Travel, April 22, 2016. Accessed August 01, 2018.

Arcade photo with Hula Girls



Jan Hansen Collection/Courtesy Boyo Press

Arcade photo, Honolulu, circa 1943.

Kearns, Landess. "Rare Vintage Photos Show WWII- Era Hawaii Like Never Before." Travel, April 22, 2016. Accessed August 01, 2018.

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