

Opening Statement

143. This number might not have an impact on anyone in this room right now, but it surely will. This number represents the 143 women and men that died on March 25, 1911 as a result of the fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist factory. This factory focused on making the renowned shirtwaists every woman desired, the headquarters being found in the corner of Washington Place and Greene Street. The workers were mainly young Immigrant women who escaped from their homelands in hopes of finding the American dream; these dreams never came true and instead of finding hospitality they found hostility in their own workplace. That hostility caused a lack of safety, due to this lack of safety this tragic fire occurred. In fact many of the workers openly protested for the improvement of better working conditions and a safer working environment which they clearly never received from their supposed sympathetic superiors, Issac Harris and Max Blank, both two immigrants from Russia. The state of the building and some decisions made by the owners of the shirtwaist factory are clearly protest worthy. To give the courtroom a visual, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory claimed the top 3 stories of the Ashe Building, the 8th, 9th, and 10th. The fire began on the 8th floor at 4:45 PM, due to a fallen cigarette which landed in a rag bin. The fire, as a result of the burning cigarette, began to spread throughout the Greene Street Staircase on the east side of the building. Both the west and east side of the building had two exits each. The Washington Place side, or the west side, had one staircase and one elevator and so did the Greene street side. There was a difference between the state of the exits on both sides however. As many witnesses will clearly state today, including the Triangle

Shirtwaist owner, on the 9th floor the Washington Place staircase door would be locked throughout the whole workday including the day of this fire violating article 6, section 80.

The prosecution comes to you today to state that if the Washington Place door had been unlocked Margaret Schwartz, a worker found dead near the Washington Place Door Exit, would have survived the Triangle Shirtwaist fire. Issiac Harris and Max Blanck are being charged with 1 count of manslaughter in the first degree and have violated the New York State Labor Law stating that "All doors leading in or to any such Factory shall be constructed as to open outwardly, where practicable, and shall not be locked, bolted, or fastened during working hours". Today you will hear from 4 witnesses for the prosecution; Edward G Worth, the battalion fire chief, brought to the court to prove the danger of the fire through his knowledgeable perspective, Ethel Garter, one of the many workers on the 9th floor, will describe the severity of the fire and how it was nearly impossible for the workers on the 9th floor to escape, Charles W Baxter, the superintendent of the Asche building, will be explaining the burnt lock found near the Washington Place door and its importance to this case, and finally Kate Alterman, yet another former worker, who will also attest to the danger of the fire. Your honor, the testimony and evidence presented today will prove that Margaret Shwartz would have survived the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire if the Washington Place Exit was not unlawfully locked by the owners of the company.

Information I need to include...

-The girls had cried out in protests, yet the conditions stayed the same