

Voices of Domestic Workers

February 3, 2009

A weekly series highlighting issues faced by domestic workers, in support of A01470, the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights.

DOMESTIC WORK IS...

- vital work
- **A LABOR OF LOVE**
- unprotected
- **PRECARIOUS**
- mistreatment
- sexual harassment
- **RACISM**
- long hours
- low pay
- **NO REST**
- **NO FOOD**
- no rights
- no privacy
- no respect
- **WAGE THEFT**
- exhausting
- isolated and invisible
- manipulation based on immigration status
- no holidays
- no sick days
- no vacations
- no recovery time
- no time off
- no healthcare
- **DEMEANING TREATMENT**
- **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**
- physical abuse
- a mental health crisis
- getting fired for speaking up
- unsafe
- left to chance
- arbitrary
- **BAD FOR SELF ESTEEM**
- on-the-spot firing
- eviction if fired
- no safety net
- **BARELY REGULATED**

... A WORKFORCE IN CRISIS



Domestic Workers United
1201 Broadway, Suite 907-8,
New York, NY 10001
212.481.5747

domesticworkersunited@gmail.com
www.domesticworkersunited.org

As the money Lou's employer owed her accumulated, what began as a good employment relationship turned abusive.



Domestic workers march for their rights.

Lou's Story

"The beginning of my experience as nanny/housekeeper for my employer was a good one. She treated me well, complimented my work and my dedication. She knew that I took care of her son and she trusted me. Back then we had a good relationship.

"However, my employer did not pay me on a regular basis from the beginning. Therefore I started to write down the days that I worked and the amount she paid me, to keep track of the amount she owed me.

"When the amount of money she owed me accumulated, she started to humiliate me. After a while, she would say that I did not speak English, and that I did not deserve the salary that she was supposed to pay me. She had one friend who would come over purposely to scream at me and insult me.

"Many times around 11:00 o'clock at night, my employer would wake me up and she would ask me to clean the floor with Clorox Bleach, saying that the house was dirty and that I had to clean it. I had to buy food for me, for her son, and for the dog because she would not give any money for the groceries. With the little money that she randomly paid me, I was able to do that.

"What started with a good relationship ended as a sad story. I had to take my employer to court in order for her to pay the salary she owed me. She always asked me to wait, that she did not have the money and that she would eventually pay me. But that day never came."

Domestic workers report that abuse increases as employers fall behind in pay or are dealing with strains in their own lives.

Always vulnerable, domestic workers are even more at risk in times of economic instability, like our current financial crisis.

The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights is especially critical now to provide workers like Lou with stability and protection.

Assemblymembers interested in co-sponsoring A01470 should contact the office of Assemblymember Keith L.T. Wright, sponsor of the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights.