

# Voices of Domestic Workers

March 9, 2009

A weekly series highlighting issues faced by domestic workers, in support of A1470/S2311, the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights.

## DOMESTIC WORK IS...

- vital work
- a labor of love
- precarious
- physical abuse
- **DEMEANING TREATMENT**
- **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**
- mistreatment
- **RACISM**
- sexual harassment
- long hours
- low pay
- no rest
- **NO FOOD**
- **NO RESPECT**
- no rights
- no privacy
- **EXHAUSTING**
- isolated and invisible
- manipulation based on immigration status
- **UNSAFE**
- no holidays
- no sick days
- no vacations
- no recovery time
- no time off
- no healthcare
- getting fired for speaking up
- **A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS**
- unprotected
- left to chance
- **WAGE THEFT**
- on-the-spot firing
- eviction if fired
- no safety net
- **BAD FOR SELF ESTEEM**
- barely regulated

## ... A WORFORCE IN CRISIS



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**Tati was forced to sleep in an unheated basement, denied food, and suffered serious emotional distress due to her employers' dehumanizing treatment.**



### Tati's story:

"In my case, I have had good, considerate employers but in these years I have also experienced difficulties which I never thought I would have to endure.

**"They've made me sleep in a basement with no heat in the dead of winter.** They've denied me food during the time I was living in and also forbid me to bring food for myself from outside. I've also been yelled at to the point where I became sick with depression and nervousness.

**"I left my last job so exhausted and destroyed I could only think of hurling myself in front of passing cars because I was made to feel so bad I wanted to die.** I felt worse than a worm after the way they told me how I was poor and that's why I was worth nothing.

"Many domestic workers are subjected to emotional and physical exploitation from which we cannot easily free ourselves because of the need to work and support our families in our home countries. Often we end up leaving these jobs when we can't take it anymore. What is sad and difficult is that **sometimes we are not paid a single penny for the work we've done.**

"For all those who want to end the modern slavery in which many domestic workers live, I ask you to hear us and join us in our fight because we are human beings. We all deserve dignity and respect."

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**Like Tati, many domestic workers in New York face a mental health crisis because of abuse they encounter on the job.**

**The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights would give these workers a chance to get the help they need by ensuring access to health care, paid sick days, and personal days.**

**Notice and severance provisions also provide domestic workers with the security they need to speak up.**

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*Those interested in co-sponsoring A1470 or S2311 should contact Assemblymember Keith L.T. Wright or Senator Diane Savino, sponsors of the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights.*