

Voices of Domestic Workers

February 9, 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**
- **PHYSICAL ABUSE**
- **DEMEANING TREATMENT**
- **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**
- **MISTREATMENT**
- **RACISM**
- sexual harassment
- **LONG HOURS**
- low pay
- **NO REST**
- no food
- no rights
- no privacy
- **NO RESPECT**
- **EXHAUSTING**
- isolated and invisible
- manipulation based on immigration status
- **NO HOLIDAYS**
- **NO SICK DAYS**
- no vacations
- **NO RECOVERY TIME**
- no time off
- no healthcare
- a mental health crisis
- getting fired for speaking up
- unsafe
- left to chance
- arbitrary
- on-the-spot firing
- **EVICTION IF FIRED**
- **NO SAFETY NET**
- bad for self esteem
- barely regulated

... A WORKFORCE IN CRISIS



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Carolyn was a live-in nanny for caring for three small children. She worked round the clock, got no holidays, and was forced back to work soon after breast cancer surgery. Her job ended with her boss beating her and hurling racist slurs.



Carolyn's Story

"I worked all day and into the night. Most nights I would get three to four hours of sleep. I was never given holidays because my employers said I was not an American so the holidays were not for me.

"When I had breast surgery, my employer said she would only allow my cousin to work 4 days for me and I would have to come back to work or I would not be paid. My employer called me two days after my surgery and demanded that I come back to work right away. I went back to work 4 days after my surgery with stitches in my right breast and a bandage over my chest.

"My job ended the day my employer beat me and pushed me down from her porch, injuring my back. While she was beating and kicking me, she was saying to me I was "nothing but a n***er" and she wanted me off her property. She kicked, she punched me, I fell down, hit my head on the sidewalk. I don't know how long I was passed out, but she was cursing and saying that she had wanted to call me a n***er for three years. And her words – because I was a n***er, no one would listen to me because she was an upstanding citizen of Massapequa Park and she pays taxes. That's how my job ended.

Carolyn is just one example of what can happen to caregivers and housekeepers who work behind closed doors, without the legal protections guaranteed to other workers.

Nobody should be put in Carolyn's situation. The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights will help protect this vulnerable workforce.

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