Trans(figurations):

On Pain and the Embodied Experiences of Domestic Workers and their Children

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the embodied experiences of domestic workers and their children as they emerged in organizing campaigns aimed at achieving a Domestic Worker Bill of Rights in California. I analyze the ways domestic worker organizers have historically conceptualized their movements around demands for dignified labor and immigration reform. I argue that their demands for protections and rights force them into a contradictory space that perpetuates vulnerability and recasts illegality—a space where domestic workers' bodies get continuously figured as exploited and in pain in order to validate demands for rights. I trace this pattern in organizational survey material across generations, where worker's voices resisted prefigured mappings of their bodies in pain, and where they laid out their own demands for a movement that challenged normative frameworks of fair labor and United States citizenship that continue to center race and gender in the transnational mobility of migrant women from Mexico and Central America. Furthermore, I explore the embodied experiences of domestic workers' children, and the embedded power relations uncovered in their memories as they narrate their childhood accompanying their mothers to work. Their memories provided an affective landscape of memory where the repetitive, and demeaning aspects of domestic work are pried apart from western, colonial arrangements of power. I argue that their collective embodied knowledge marks a reframing of pain where transfiguration is possible and transformative patterns of becoming are prioritized. I propose interpreting these collective, embodied memories as a constellation of shimmers—luminous points that align to expose the relationships between workers, their children, employers, and their families, and the specific context in which they were produced. Altogether, they

create what I call a brown luminosity—forces activated by their mothers' labor that created multiple worlds of possibilities for their children, resulting in nomadic memories which move beyond victimizing their mother's bodies to enable an ever-changing perspective of the ways their labor has radically transformed homes, livelihoods, and transnational spaces.

Para mi Mamá

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CA DWBR- California Domestic Worker Bill of Rights

CDWC - California Domestic Worker Coalition

CHIRLA- Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, Los Angeles

DWBR- Domestic Worker Bill of Rights

IDEPSCA- Instituto de Educacion Popular del Sur de California

IDWF - International Domestic Workers Federation

MEA – Mujeres en Acción

NDLON- National Day Laborer Organizing Network

NDWA- National Domestic Worker Organization

NY DWBR- New York Domestic Worker Bill of Rights

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My Journey

My way of understanding the world has always been strongly influenced by the women in my family. Some of my most memorable childhood experiences have been around my mother and aunts who despite living difficult lives, always managed to bring joy in the form of storytelling. My mother and aunts migrated to the United States from Zacatecas, Mexico in the 1970s, escaping severe poverty as a result of the country's ongoing economic crisis. When they arrived to Los Angeles, California, they immediately began working cleaning homes to support their families. As a child, I would join my mom in her daily work routine. We would travel what felt like never ending distances on bus from Boyle Heights to the outskirts of the city. I would watch her as she would prepare her cleaning supplies and strategically tackle rooms—bathrooms first, then came the bedrooms, then living rooms, and always the kitchen last. "Es lo mas difícil (it's the most difficult)," she would say. I always admired how talented she was at transforming a space. As much as I was keenly observant of how she performed her labor, I was also attentive of the homes and their families and the different worlds that they inhabited. I remember asking a lot of questions. Some employers would complain to my mother for bringing me with her. Others would welcome me. Regardless, our presence in those spaces always felt rushed, and never felt right.

On the weekends, when my mother would reunite with my aunts for family gatherings, they would share stories from their week of work but also stories of migration, nostalgia, and their memories of childhood back in Mexico. I was privileged to

have been able to travel to Mexico several times growing up and connect their memories with the people and landscapes they told many stories about. Spending time with my grandmothers especially impacted me—I got to witness them at work in the home, where the smells of freshly cooked beans, eggs, and tortillas in the early morning awakened the senses. Morning breakfasts were followed by hours in the garden where my grandmother sang to her plants. She would grab my hand and show me how to prune rose bushes and scrape spines off *nopales*, preparing them for our afternoon meal. Before the sun would set, we would carry chairs to the front of the house and greet neighbors by their first name, welcoming endless conversations. Their stories always implicated their bodies. Together, they would always comment on how hard the week was, but how accomplished they felt. "El trabajo nunca se acaba" they would say, as they massaged their hands, knees, and feet. "Our work never ends," they continue to say. These were oftentimes difficult conversations, but they always ended with a loving embrace.

I share these stories because they are central to my understanding of the domestic worker experience. My processing of the memories with my family became informed by my educational path into college where I was encouraged to understand these experiences in complex ways. It was also in college where I finally got to share my stories with other classmates who shared similar experiences. As a result, I felt compelled to write about the embodied experiences of domestic workers in Los Angeles, women who were immigrants from Mexico and Central America who had been working cleaning homes for most of their lives. I was especially interested in the ways domestic work shaped and transformed the body. Workers spoke of the many ways they sacrificed their bodies on the job, how quickly they felt they were aging, and the traditional, cultural practices they

engaged in to heal their bodies. They kept returning to pain, and consequently so did I. That is what led me to the focus of this research, which is to further explore pain and the embodied experiences of domestic workers and their children.

More than just a research project, it was a topic that grew increasingly urgent for me. During the course of my research, my aunt was evicted from her home and was forced to return back to Mexico after more than 30 years in the country. My mother although still cleaning houses, was beginning to show signs of premature severe arthritis. My cousin, who had the most difficult work routine cleaning up to three homes a day almost seven days a week, got diagnosed with cancer. I was confronted with the prospect of losing them too quickly, and their stories forgotten. I wanted to go against the nations' disposability of immigrant bodies when they are no longer able to work. How did our communities survive, fight against, and protect themselves from these conditions of migration and work as a result of neoliberal globalization? How might children of workers remember and carry on the legacies of their mothers and grandmother's labor across generations?

As a result of these experiences, interests, and questions, I engaged in a research journey that took me into the world of domestic worker organizing. Domestic workers had historically been fighting for worker's rights, and I was eager to learn more about their activism in our immigrant communities and their recent campaigns for a domestic worker bill of rights. In addition, I was curious about the role that children played in these conversations. What were their stories, and how did they embody the memory of their mothers, families, and communities across borders and through time? How were their visions for a more inclusive future different from those expressed in organizing? As you

enter the dissertation, you might feel like you are being pulled into two different directions, and as result feel confused, disconnected, and overwhelmed. My intentions are not meant to isolate and exclude readers, but rather honor the multiplicity and fluidity of experiences and memory. I do provide conceptual clues that will help readers travel across my vision of a cross-cultural, interconnected, embodied, nomadic approach to understanding the domestic worker experience—one that centers social justice and ongoing transformation.

A Multiplicity of Narratives

Yo trabaje completamente los 9 meses. Solo espere 15 días. De allí espere 40 días a volver a trabajar. Si, 15 días antes. Era muy activa. Cuidaba a una niña, los llevaba a la escuela, manejaba, iba y venia, y sí. Esas personas con que yo trabaje eran muy buenas personas. En aquel tiempo me pagaban 350 dólares a la semana, de allí me aumentaron. Llegué a ganar 550 dólares con esa familia en los 80s. Duré 25 anos, hace 5 años me salí de con ella. Llegué en un marzo, y en octubre empecé a trabajar con ella. Tenía apenas mis 18 anos. No la hubiera dejado, pero como ya era tiempo…Tengo un horario que entrar, entro más o menos alas 9 y me gusta salirme más o menos como a las cinco. A veces que no puedo, salgo alas 5:30. Los viernes salgo a veces hasta las 6:30 o casi las 7. Porque es el día que hago 4 casas. Están chiquitas, pero de todos modos son 4. Y pues me tardo. Tomo aprecio del trabajo que me dan y me importa mucho que esten contentas. Y allí es donde no me dejan que yo progrese económicamente porque les doy mucho de mi tiempo.

-Estela, describing her work routine[1]

[1] English Translation: I worked the complete 9 months. I only waited 15 days. From there I waited 40 days before returning to work. Yes, 15 days before. I was very active. I cared for a young girl, I would take them to school, drove, left and returned, just like that. The people whom I worked for were very good people. At the time they would pay me 350 dollars a week and from there they raised it. I came to earn 550 dollars with that family in the 80s. I lasted 25 years and left her 5 years ago. I arrived in March, and in October I started working with her. I was barely 18 years old. I wouldn't have left her, but it was time. I have a schedule where I enter sometime around 9 and I like leaving like around 5. Sometimes when I can't, I get out at 5:30. On Fridays, I get out sometimes at 6:30, almost 7. Because that is the day that I clean 4 houses. They are small, but either way there are 4. And so it takes time. I appreciate the work they give me and I care very much that they are happy. And that's where they do not let me progress economically because I give them a lot of my time.

I knew from the moment we entered that a monumental event had just taken place. We opened the front door for the first time to let air sweep in like a vacuum. I remember the afternoon sun through the windows had a soft glow pushing in light into the living room. Everything had been cleaned - kitchen, living room, bathrooms, and bedrooms all had this scent. The floors had been mopped, the tables and coffee table had been wiped clean. I would make my way around the house searching for my mom. I sometimes would see the laundry hanging on the line in the backyard when I would peek from my bedroom window to see if she was outside. I would find her in bed taking an afternoon nap, and I would climb in bed with her, and wrap myself all around her body.

-Ana, daughter of domestic worker

I have worked since the age of 5 as a household worker. I immigrated to the United States when I was 15 years old. I entered directly into work taking care of children. I was abused as a household worker, in Mexico and also in the United States. My experience is not unique, it is an experience shared by thousands of household workers. I am representing a network of more than 100 organizations and unions from all parts of the world. We are listening to your perspectives and take your concerns seriously. We have heard from many [of you] that we need a rectifiable instrument; others say that is has to be flexible and want to be able to implement it progressively. A weak convention will only reinforce the vulnerability that we have. It will send the message that it's ok to continue devaluing, marginalizing, and exploiting household workers. *Compañeros*, we have the opportunity to correct this injustice and leave a legacy to our children that the work of women has value like any other work.

Guillermina Castellanos, an organizer giving her testimony in support of Convention 189

Over the span of several years, I have found myself transformed by the narratives above, experiences that reflect differing narrations of the domestic worker experience. These narratives describe an event, a scene, as told by their embodied memory and experience of it, from the worker herself, to the children, and that of the worker-turned-organizer. Each fragment directs us toward an understanding of the experience of domestic work at different points in time and space. The worker forces us into the rhythm of domesticity, its frenzied and rushed pace, routinized by the mechanisms of power and modernity

where the outcome is the surveillance of bodies and productivity. The retelling of the act through the perspective of the child (now adult) describes a scene that gestures toward a nomadic slowness of things, inviting us to momentarily set trauma and witnessing aside, and instead experience the possibility of what it means to recognize the domestic worker experience with dignity intact. This quest for dignity is central to the domestic worker's rights movement, where their legislative demands hinge on appeals to logics of the state on grounds of recognition, inclusion, and compensation. Such appeals, as the excerpt from Guillermina notes, also relies on a coherent trajectory, effectively translated to register an injured body in pain standardized for its institutional encounter. These events and memories offer a diversity of voices that similarly rewind "toward forgotten or half-sustained past possibilities" where the ""repair" work of emancipation" can "co-exist alongside more transformative patterns of becoming" (Braidotti, 2014, p. 236-237). This dissertation examines such events, memories, and practices that inform the ways the migrant domestic worker experience is embodied, remembered, and recognized differently, through its mobilizations and its confrontations with normative narratives and official histories.

Specifically, this research reexamines the competing narratives that circulate around the coalitional, state-wide mobilization for a domestic worker bill of rights. I look into organizing spaces where immigrants meet, share stories and exchange ideas and collaborate on projects that seek to empower domestic workers through legislative demands. These spaces encourage dialogue and exchange diverse perspectives in understanding the complex conditions of the occupation. These perspectives are informed by the various roles that domestic workers take on (housecleaning, babysitter, caretaker,

etc.) and their unique histories as immigrants, women, mothers, daughters, and even fathers.[2] The organizing strategies of the movement centers around correcting a historical wrong, the devaluation of domestic work and its exclusion from labor protections and rights. The vocabulary of this rights-based movement highlights how these forms of exclusion carry disproportionate, material consequences in the everyday life of workers. Domestic worker organizers conduct the research and are tasked with delineating certain experiences and narratives that set the stage for highlighting multiple forms of exploitation, thus exposing the state's complicit role in obfuscating the history of domestic work in the U.S. and the continued transnational demand for immigrant labor. I examine this history and the shifting mobilizing strategies of the movement to examine their demands for an alternative worker right's model that will formalize domestic work and empower workers despite citizenship status. While legal victories and cross-sectoral coalitions are recognized, a critical examination of dissenting voices and histories within the movement is simultaneously put forth. This analysis reflects socio-political dynamics that deride internal conflicts shaped by racial and ethnic hierarchies and differing immigrant experiences. Possibilities can emerge if we consider how these conflicts evoke informal, inadmissible remnants of a colonial history of racism, slavery, U.S. imperialism, anti-immigration policies, and the various ways these are questioned not just in the legal realm but in everyday life and our imaginaries of the future.

Research Questions

[2] According to the NDWA, 90% of the domestic worker workforce in the U.S. are women and predominantly women of color. Domestic work is also the workforce with the largest concentration of undocumented immigrants of any sector in our society, and also the largest growing (https://domesticworkers.org).

While I examine and critique the intricacies and contradictions of this movement, its strategies and accomplishments, I draw from the narratives of the children of workers who like myself, inherit the memory of their mother's labor as domestic workers. I ask: How do adult children remember and understand their mother's work experience, and what forms of resistance are uncovered in the process? How do they participate in the production of memory and the legacy of their mother's labor through time? I focus on the diverse histories of Central American and Mexican women and their children by analyzing their experience with migration and domestic work in Los Angeles. I examine the ways they have organized their memories of their mother's work and how they reflect upon this process as they are older and have come to understand their mother's work since their childhood. The narratives of the adult children of domestic workers take us on a non-synchronous journey referencing unique sites that frame their understanding of their mother's work experience. This includes their mother's (and in some cases, their) childhood in their country of origin, histories of violence and displacement, and their migration experience. I follow the forces that frame the experiences of children and the ways they similarly shape those in organizing. These include engaging in politics of visibility and empowerment that rely on U.S. discourses of white heteronormative family, citizenship, and neoliberalism. Both offer two distinct sensibilities/perspectives which I place in conversation with each other to draw out the limits, contradictions around how the figure of the worker is perceived. Placing these two in conversation generates the potential to reveal attachments to certain arrangements of power and destabilize rigid representations that continue to inform our cultural sensibility to domesticity. The argument is not to privilege one perspective or narrative over the other but instead discuss

how they each propose theorizing domestic work beyond captivity, pain, and exploitation differently. These series of embodied memories requires careful treading, particularly as they enter contradictory moments where the presence of one requires the invisibility of the other. This is particularly the case with domestic workers who work having to leave their children behind, but also when employers prohibit the children of workers in their home while their mothers are cleaning. There is a gendered dynamic with this where if daughter is present, daughter is asked to clean and/or serve as objects of play, while sons are allowed more flexibility to access white middle-class activities. However, highlighting the experiences of the children contributes to a gap in the literature that predominantly examines the domestic workers' experience through the employer-worker relationship, history of activism and organizing, and testimonial narratives. Scholarship on the children of domestic workers imagines them as bodies that are left behind, ambivalent, and temporary. They occupy an uncertain cultural space within the colonial arrangements persistent in the restructuring of a transnational family arrangement. I emphasize their role as collaborators in the making of memory that displaces the figure of the worker as one that not only yearns for visibility, but most importantly, as one that collectively demands how they want to be made visible in the construction of their future. Altogether, they offer prospective possibilities/new spaces for inhabiting alternate ways to see this experience. My research questions are as follows:

a. How do contextual, social, economic, and political processes influence the ways domestic worker organizers resist and negotiate low wages, abusive conditions in the home/workplace, isolation, and surveillance of their bodies?

What kind of role is being offered to them, and what kind of memory is being produced as a result?

b. How do their children understand and remember their mother's work experience, and what forms of resistance are uncovered in the process? How do they speculate about the future and the legacy of their mother's labor?

Literature Review

Domestic Worker Organizing

The statement put forth by Evelyn Nakano Glenn that the rights of domestic workers in the United States have long been equated with duties rather than with political liberty and personal autonomy best captures the colonial, historical captivity of domestic work in the U.S. (2010). The occupation of domestic work carries roots in both slave and feudal economies, with its various divisions of labor reproducing gender divisions in society (Romero, 1998). Racial and gendered stratification of labor eventually replaced indentured servitude in the South, with both female and male Black slaves performing most of the unpaid domestic work and continuing to transform Black women from slaves to low-wage servants (Rollins, 1985; Romero, 1992; Nadasen, 2016) Yet, workers faced serious disenfranchisements in the transition to the labor market. After the civil war and reconstruction, freedmen and women were bereft of material resources that would have allowed them to become independent workers. While slavery was rewritten to naturalize white supremacy, criminal laws such as vagrancy statutes and petty crimes were written to compel labor (Glenn, 2010). Black and immigrant women were forced into coercive labor regimes where labor market segregation and racial discrimination denied them other ways of earning, pushing them to take on domestic employment (Nakano Glenn,

2010; Parreñas, 2008; Nadasen, 2015). Systems of reform aimed at acculturating Native American women in Indian boarding and vocational schools and prisons, for example, used "domestic science" to discipline women to become emotional matrons that model national standards of domesticity (Nakano Glenn, 2010). This colonial project in the Southwest is further documented via a historical analysis of outing programs with white women employed as matrons to serve as agents of colonialism on behalf of the US government, where they trained Native American women to work as domestic servants in white households, thereby defining limits of gender, class and racial boundaries (Haskins, 2012). These labor regimes, as they pertain to the domestic service sector, are also outlined by Chang when she documented how immigration and welfare policies in the United States contributed to increasing numbers of immigrants being channeled into the growing service sector in the U.S. economy (2000). The construction and implementation of such policies distinctly reinforced a separation from the human needs of workers and the employers who depended upon their daily labor to reinforce social status (Chang 2000).

The colonial legacy of domesticity and servitude is further complicated if we consider the larger context of coloniality within migration policies. According to Rodriguez, the transnational mobility of migrant women evokes a colonial past that continues to shape "processes of "othering," technologies of representations, and logics of racism" influenced by former colonial relations with respective countries (2007, p. 62). While these policies define each group differently, paid domestic work in general remains unregulated, devalued, underpaid and continues to be described as "invisible" and performed in the "shadows" (Romero, 1992; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Parreñas,

2008; Chang, 2000). Today the group that composes the majority of domestic work and care labor in the United States are migrants coming from Mexico, Central America, the Philippines, and the Caribbean. The increasing labor performed by migrants from Central America and Mexico, for example, has been widely examined in the spatial context of Los Angeles (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Zentgraf, 2002; Rosenbaum, 2017; Ochoa and Ochoa, 2005) Filipinos in San Francisco (Rodriguez 2010) and South Asian and Caribbean migrant domestic workers in New York (Cole, 1986; Das Gupta, 2006; Ray and Qayum, 2009; Brown, 2011; Francisco, 2012; Gurung, 2015). These conversations on the structure of gendered flows of labor across borders are necessary to account for the many systemic inequalities shaping the expanding service economy.

Many workers, scholars, and activists demanding rights and legal standards continue to bring forth these concerns that have still manipulated oppressive conditions in the workplace. They continue to address the tensions that arise out of the vulnerabilities of the occupation, especially as it pertains to migrant women with embodied histories and precarious legal statuses. Ray and Qayum (2009), for example, document what they call "traveling cultures of servitude" that migrant women from Calcutta, India bring with them when they migrate to the U.S.. They propose not looking at the transitions of feudalism to modernity and the changes that come with them from an assumed uniformity oftentimes determined by the United States. Instead, they focus on culture and agency and the neoliberal, global economy's manifestations of labor within the home, as it collides and moves along with multiple cultures of servitude from one's country of origin to a transnational context (Ray and Qayum, 2009). Examining the transnational movement of racial ideologies in archival material, Taylor Phillips (2013) provides an

interesting analysis that traces the racialization of Irish and African American domestic workers. Through their parallel histories with English colonialism and migration to the U.S., they were marked by racial differences in ways that determined who deserved access to American citizenship, and the ways "constructions of blackness also played a critical role in demarcating the domestic workplace as site where boundaries of race and citizenship were imagined and contested daily. (Taylor Phillips 2013, p. 380). Monisha Das Gupta looks further into this transnational context, examining South Asian immigrant communities in New York and the relationship between identity, culture and politics in social justice struggles (2006). She identifies the "transnational complex of rights"—a process of claiming rights as South Asian immigrants and not citizens focused on challenging the nation-state as determining migrant rights, tapping into various rights regimes in order to develop alternate routes that allow mobility and personhood (Das Gupta, 2006, p. 19). For example, by making demands to human rights institutions, organizations working with survivors of domestic violence, and jurisdiction laws in countries of origin, migrant workers made public additional forms of exploitation experienced in domestic work. They moved across the private/public boundaries of the home and demonstrated outside employer's homes which challenged capitalism's devaluation and invisibilization of women's work inside the home. Their mobilization held institutions accountable for labor, domestic violence, migrant, and women's rights abuses (Das Gupta, 2006, p. 214).

Practices of abstraction and the continued reification of the hierarchies embedded in the arrangement of domestic work have been a central preoccupation for domestic workers interested in using them as sites from where to organize. Domestic worker

organizations have continued raising issues that domestic workers experience and resist, oftentimes by drawing upon core insights from scholarship attentive to the intricacies of worker-employer dynamics in the home. Focusing on black domestic workers and their relationships with white employers, Judith Rollins (1985) examines how this labor arrangement reflects a division of labor that interacts with the capitalist class structure and the patriarchal sex hierarchy. She also explores how this gender and sex hierarchy is differentiated across racial and class lines. Pertinent to this study is her insight into the psychodynamics of this domination expressed by the employers, for example, when they convey resentment towards domestic workers who strive to educate themselves and improve their conditions (Rollins, 1985, p. 195). Historian Phyllis Palmer also looks at the differential experiences among white housewives and domestic workers, and finds that although housewives expressed interest in standardizing domestic work through government funded programs in the past, it was mostly so that they could attract workers to maintain standards of domesticity in their homes while they sought social mobility outside their homes; when those programs failed to become permanent, domestic workers continued to organize to regulate workplace conditions, hours, and higher pay through state legislation. Employers strongly opposed the concerns and proposals of domestic workers mostly due to their resistance to negotiate contracts and changing the unequal design of housework (Palmer, 1989, p. 114-115). The conditions of domestic work have remained the same since its transition from slavery and include low wages, no paid benefits or overtime pay, no rest breaks and days off at the end of the week, and no vacation. Domestic workers have historically organized against these exploitative workplace conditions but have continued to meet resistance due to employers' hesitance

to relinquish power in ways that fundamentally destabilizes the hierarchical white supremacist, heteronormative, patriarchal power structures of domination. These tensions are made evident across various moments in time (as will be discussed in chapter 2), where workers have been forced to take on reformist approaches to address their workplace conditions, compromising the most radical visions and plans for the future of the occupation.

Another example of scholarship that has served as a central reference for organizing domestic workers today is Mary Romero's foundational text, *Maid in the U.S.A.* (1992). Romero focuses on an intersectional analysis of race, gender, and class which has shaped the experiences of Chicana domestic workers and highlighted the ambiguities of paid and unpaid domestic work. She shows how these issues continue to inform the manual, mental, and emotional burdens that domestic workers face today. At the forefront, Romero places the working conditions and systems of power that continue to embed domestic workers into an unregulated occupation still seen as unpaid work. The deskilling of housework continues to be an issue that contributes to the home still not being able to be seen as a workplace, and feminism's failure to address domesticity. Romero states that this is a result of housework being referred as a "labor of love" that exercises "maternal instincts" and carries emotional weight (1992, p. 73). Hondagneu-Sotelo's *Doméstica* (2001), which focuses on Central American and Mexican women's experiences in Los Angeles, also reveals practices and relationships between employers and domestic workers and shape domestic work. In her analysis of these interrelationships, Hondagneu-Sotelo distinguishes between maternalism and personalism. She defines maternalism as a one-way relationship characterized by gestures

of charity in exchange for loyalty and commitment to service, problematically positioning the employee as "needy, deficient, and childlike" which does not allow for dignity and respect. Personalism differs in that is more of a two-way relationship that involves the employer's recognition of the employer's personhood, providing a much preferred experience in the workplace yet still used as a strategy by employees to mask long hours and low salaries in the workplace (2001, p. 207-208). These interpersonal employer-employee relationships as identified by Hondagneu-Sotelo contrast with what Romero previously documented are racialized stigmas that reinforce bonds of oppression—social (and not interpersonal) relationships that function as part of the structure of advanced capitalism rooted in sexual and racial systems of domination.[3] Despite this difference of emphasis, both Hondagneu-Sotelo and Romero advocate formalizing domestic work—Hondagneu-Sotelo suggests pathways to regulating employment and collective organizing among workers to improve conditions, while Romero calls for transforming paid housework to include higher wages, annual raises, social security, vacation, benefits that can be fought through organizing, in addition to also redefining reproductive labor as society's work and not women's work (Romero 1992, p. 201). These timeless contributions continue to not only inform organizing strategies, but also the ways by

[3] Romero defines interpersonal relationships as social relationships existing within a capitalist economy reflecting a competitive nature that seeks to maximize amount of unpaid labor: "Asymmetry not only exists in the power relationships between employee and employer but is exaggerated and accentuated by the sexual and racial systems of domination. Within the structure of advanced capitalism, racism and capitalism cannot be considered personal relationships but are part of the structure of exploitation" (1992; p.142).

which domestic workers are trying to dismantle the culture of racialized, gendered servitude that remains an unquestioned relation of our social life.

Following Romero and Hondagneu-Sotelo's scholarship, increased attention was given to the transnational dimensions of domestic work, and its continued demand for immigrant labor through the implementation of immigration policies and temporary legal statuses. Literature on domestic work returned to discussing the parameters of citizenship, and the ways migrant domestic workers have pushed the boundaries of citizenship through organizing. The current debates in literature that are examining these intersections and their manifestations can be observed in the ways citizenship continues to be theorized as a contradictory space where demands for immigrant rights perpetuate vulnerability by recasting illegality. Cacho contends that activist demands for rights are oftentimes articulated as "family rights" around the notion of the "good" immigrant/citizen, which ironically, only conforms to U.S. heteronormative morals that go against communities' own modes of survival (2012). According to Cacho, the immigrant community must frame their demands outside the confines of U.S. law and avoid the model minority narrative in order to avoid capitalistic logics that stigmatize, disconnect, and position the African American movement against the immigrant rights movement (2012). These are strategies of containment that support a neoliberal logic to contain a racialized space of social and political containment—one which frames our relationship to law on "principles of fairness, equality and protection" and creates structures of disposability among Latino immigrants in the U.S. (Rocco, 2016, p.112). Furthermore, in his book *Ingenious Citizenship: Recrafting Democracy for Social Change*, Lee questions the democratic mode of political engagement that Western liberal

citizenship creates, in order to critique how this systematically marginalizes ingenious acts of resistance seeks to expand inclusion (2016). Lee offers an analysis of the novel *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett (2009) and the ways the National Domestic Worker Association (NDWA) took the popularity of its Hollywood, cinematic, interpretation as an opportunity to reposition the current struggles of domestic workers. Lee highlights the ways migrant domestic workers "engender fluid configurations of change" by appropriating the script of democratic activism to disrupt racial repression despite being complicit with reproducing the "proper" citizen figure (2016, p. 6). Overall, it becomes clear that domestic worker organizing as articulated through the perspective of race, immigration and citizenship, demands for their struggle not to hinge on the perception of deserving to bear rights. It should also be recognized that embracing the concept of human rights as being able to adequately address injustice would not do justice to the complexity of their struggle.

On Children

Children in recent domestic worker organizing efforts have played a central role in key demonstrations in California where marches organized in the capitol centered on the children of both domestic workers and employers. These Children's' Marches (taking place between 2012-2016) reflect similar efforts to appeal to the democratic platform of demanding rights based on the reproduction of the U.S. heteronormative family model, the "good" immigrant/citizen, and the "good mother." However, children's participation by taking the podium, reading speeches, and sharing their stories of their mother's work experience also rendered visible the collective injury that workers and their families experience because of the denial of labor protections and a decent living wage. In many

ways, children's participation in these mobilizations marks a new stage in the ways they have articulated themselves in relation to the immigrant work experience and its shifting relations as a result of immigration policies and transnational family networks developed across space and time. Literature examining children within the domestic worker experience highlights forms of existence that speaks to the use of their bodies and its making of historically and culturally specific worlds. Much of the scholarship on the children of domestic workers discusses the socio-political mechanisms that displace children from the traditional configurations of family, motherhood, care, and home. Children are figured prominently in the literature that concentrates on the arrangement of domestic work and transnational motherhood.

According to her study in 2001, an estimated 40 percent of domestic workers from Mexico and Central America surveyed left at least one child "back home" in their countries of origin (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001, p. 205). The Latina transnational motherhood experience is defined as the transformation of family arrangements and alternative constructions of motherhood as one of "I'm Here, but I'm There." This phrase describes the ways mothers are simultaneously in both places at once, using different methods by which they may remain involved with family and children back home (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997). Family separation and motherhood in a transnational context has contributed to alternative constructions of motherhood which places children in a family that extends the traditional nuclear family unit. In this extended family model, mothers are not seen as the exclusive caretakers of children (Parreñas, 2005; Nicholson, 2006; Moran-Taylor, 2008). For example, Boehm (2008) examines the transnational experience of children who live both in Mexico and the

United States and highlights the complexities of parents' motivation to migrate as a way of supporting their children. Boehm finds that as a result of the changing terrain of (transnational) state power, children are continuously placed in shifting configurations of kinship such as the division of families which creates precarious situations that informs their diverse experiences (2008). Yarris (2014) describes these diverse experiences of the children of female migrant workers from Nicaragua, relating their experience of being "left behind." Children's' experiences are informed by complex understandings of structural processes that delineates family separation and cultural narratives of mothers' migration "as a necessary sacrifice for children's wellbeing" (Yarris, 2014, p. 296). These children engage with remittances on material and affective levels, develop strong ties to grandmothers and other caregivers in their mothers' absence (Sanchez Molina, 2015), and form an ambivalent imaginary that encompasses both uncertainty and hope towards the possibility of reunification, transformation, and change (Yarris, 2014).[4] Oliveira adds to this research with her book *Motherhood Across Borders: Immigrants and their Children in Mexico and New York,* where she explores the ways in which maternal migration shapes the lives of the children of immigrant women on both sides of the border, and how caregivers (mostly grandmothers) and mothers both share child-rearing

[4] Due to varied legal statuses that place immigrant families in precarious situations and the Trump administration's zero-tolerance approach to deter immigration, increase enforcement, and expedite deportations, family separation has continued to rise and reunification remains uncertain for families today. In Summer of 2018, a family separation policy was adopted across the entire U.S.-Mexico border which separated children from parents or guardians with whom they entered the U.S. with. Although this policy was reversed, it has resulted in a crisis whereas of Summer of 2019, children continue being detained at the border and placed in indefinite detention, parents continue being prosecuted, and asylum seekers continue being refused at border crossings as well.

practices developing what she calls a "transnational care constellation" (2018). She argues that within this transnational care constellation, children's lived experiences of family separation are seen beyond the frame of being "left behind" where children are able to imagine the other side of the border, and through that explore differences in inequality and their sense of belonging to their transnational family (2018). In her exploration of transnational family arrangements and the care communities that emerge within the experiences of Filipina migrants working as domestic workers in New York City, Francisco-Menchavez similarly examines children's' roles and contributions as sustaining innovative engagements in care work within and against the conditions of prolonged separation as a result of neoliberal globalization (2018). Through their inventive practices via the use of technology and social media networks, children are able to reconfigure family and create new forms of solidarity in diasporic sites that "center fictive kinship as a form of transnational family operations," enabling a simultaneity that allows them to transform social relations (2018, p. 7-18). While these studies examine children's multidirectional forms of agency and care during separation, De Leon (2009) instead focuses her research on the long-term effects of family separation and reunification among Filipina domestic workers and their adult daughters through time (separation, during separation, and post reunification). De Leon describes children's difficult adjustment with feelings of betrayal and resentment and the harsh realization of their mother's precarious position as migrant workers in Canada (2009). These challenges were mitigated by their involvement in activist organizations—getting involved allowed them to "name [their] childhood pain and understand the structural causes behind it" (De Leon, 2016, p. 151) and rebuild their relationships with their mothers (De Leon, 2009).

Specifically, De Leon emphasizes the effects of family separation as ongoing and never stable, 'persisting and manifesting in different ways and across generations" (2009, p.154). Overall, the literature on family separation as a result of migration and transnational motherhood figures children as necessary placemakers responsible for making visible the sacrifice of their mother's work. It imagines them as embodying painful resentments that affect them through time. This narrative is extended to the discussions which address the precarious legalities that shape the experiences of transnational families in the U.S., and the factors that promote them.

The body of scholarship that investigates U.S. immigration policy and the ways it impacts transnational families outlines a series of historical, socio-political factors that make visible the historical violence of U.S. imperialism in Central America. Structural factors that promote and prolong family separation are mentioned in Molina's study of Honduran mothers and their children, referencing Honduras' economic dependence on the U.S. and the political crisis exacerbated by a military coup in 2009 that continues to displace families, and mothers in particular, into a gender-segmented labor market of domestic work (2015). Diverse immigration patterns from Central America vary across time; however, increased migration in places like Washington, D.C. documented a direct recruitment of women by international diplomats to work as housekeepers, nannies, and careworkers (Repak, 1995). Legal provisions such as temporary protective status (TPS)[5]

[5] TPS is designated to foreign states that are experiencing ongoing armed conflict, environmental disasters, or extraordinary or temporary conditions that pose serious threat to personal safety and prevent its nationals from safely returning. To be eligible, you must have entered the country before 2001 (El Salvador) and 1998 (Honduras), re-register every 18 months, and DHS is required "to "determine" whether the conditions that gave rise to the designation "continue to be met" (Warren and Kerwin 2017; 579).

with beneficiaries from El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua were state-legal responses to increased migration of the 1990s. These provisions influence the transnational social space in creating a "permanent temporariness", which limits geographic, economic, social, and political opportunities that directly affect a large number of individuals and families (Bailey et al., 2002). According to a study by the Center for Migration Studies, the TPS population from El Salvador and Honduras reveals that a high percentage of those, who "have lived in the U.S. for 20 years or more, arrived as children and have U.S. citizen children" (Warren and Kerwin, 2017, p. 577). The restricted and uncertain nature of TPS disrupts and permeates the daily life of immigrant transnational families while also obscuring U.S. political and economic influences in Central America that in turn cause large populations to flee in the first place. These include such factors as the U.S. role in the arming and training of military governments responsible for armed conflicts, disappearances, massacres, genocide of Maya indigenous people, neoliberal free trade agreements, and the destruction of environment, all rooted in a legacy of colonialism and modernity. The legislative history of TPS documents a refusal by the U.S. to take accountability for its role in supporting the right-wing governments of El Salvador and

TPS recipients are placed in a legal limbo that does not allow them to travel, sponsor family members, and excluded from most public resources. El Salvador and Honduras represent the two largest TPS populations (195,000 Salvadorans and 57,000 Hondurans). Los Angeles has the largest population of TPS recipients from El Salvador (29,400) with 26,500 U.S. born children (Warren and Kerwin 2017). TPS designation for Salvadorans was set to end on September 9, 2019 as a result of Trump's administrative decision to terminate the status. However, the decision to terminate was suspended by the *Ramos v. Nielsen* court order stopping TPS terminations for El Salvador, but also Honduras, Nicaragua, and Haiti. The court order *Ramos v. Nielsen* will be discussed further in chapter 3.

Honduras that went on to commit mass human rights violations. Although TPS paradoxically functions as a humanitarian legislative response to immigrants who fled from these nations, this has been a result of strategic mobilizing on behalf of the Central American immigrant community demanding to change their legal conditions both in the U.S. and in their homelands (Coutin, 1998). Furthermore, there has been a clear congressional intent to not adjust their status into permanent residency status. No intent has been shown to foster their "full integration" into society, which has led to an "unresolved" immigration status that makes evident the unresolved and hidden memory of violence that is not temporary in nature but an ongoing humanitarian crisis which continues to unfold (Bergeron, 2014). It is important to note that these legal scripts embody diverse histories of U.S. imperialism that consistently rely on a racial and gendered demand for immigrant labor. They are also continuous with the project of nationalism both in Central America and the U.S.. Children become marked as secondary figures within the ever-shifting legal boundaries of such immigration policies, denying their active role in contributing to transnational family dynamics and disrupting the erasure of their experiences as temporary.

Another area where children figure prominently in domestic worker literature is in discussions that address the experiences of the children of employers under the care of domestic workers. They reveal a tenuous relationship that highlights the ways children of employers uphold a version of modernity and whiteness that situates domestic workers in persistent arrangements of servitude. For example, in her study that researches Greek children and their perspectives on Asian domestic workers, Spyrou argues that Greek children base their views on domestic workers on racism and nationalism, in addition to

their relationship to them and their evaluation of their work performance (2009). The children of employers are in fact "little employers" that come to see domestic workers from their point of view through a sense of entitlement, and they cannot imagine them as anything else but a domestic worker. Their views and relationship are hence influenced by racism, nationalism and an otherness based on constructions of class, gender, and ethnic difference (Spyrou, 2009, p. 165). Although they express points of similarity that humanizes the workers, they still reflect a tense relationship that also harbors intolerance. These children are involved in the process of racialization, but also cross the boundaries of childhood into adulthood via their power and status (169). They have access to diverse voices and power to orchestrate and author their own identities, filled with tensions and contradictions as they both like and objectify domestic workers. They fabricate the presence of the worker in a way that denies them complexity, and the power to become. For example, as Spyrou notes:

> "A domestic worker, in the minds of some of the children, cannot be anything else but a domestic worker. She is fully identified with her occupation in a way that it makes it unimaginable for her to engage in anything but domestic work. The social role of the domestic worker is defined in terms of her ability to satisfy her employers by consistently presenting an ideal character" (Spyrou 166).

The affective presence of the domestic worker that is imagined here is one that is required to be unquestionably serviceable where utility determines their visibility. Souralová (2017) researches the children's perspective as care recipients from domestic workers and nannies and argues that their experience receiving care from paid domestic work is one of active reflection on family relations. Children inherit socio-cultural capital from the workers, a transmission of knowledge from which children construct their identities, but also confront resistance from parents /employers who limit this interaction

based on colonial logics of cultural contamination and moral fear from domestic workers from a racialized, ethnic background (Souralová, 2017). This promotes an unequal power relationship and treatment of domestic workers on behalf of children where they see them as distant, passive figures in ways that facilitate a process of cultural hegemony. Children of employers are rarely seen as inheritors of knowledge yet develop emotional kinship ties with their caretakers. Very often, care recipients reflect on their nannies in emotional frames that erase the experience of the workers, and almost always, their experience with their children.

Lastly, in a body of work that most closely approximates the experience of the children of domestic workers is research that tackles the question, "Who is caring for the maid's children?" (Romero, 2001). In her book *The Maid's Daughter*, Romero addresses the gap in scholarship that seldomly explores the experiences of the children of domestic workers, and questions what it means when mothers have less quality time to spend with their children, and what the children think or feel about their mother's relationship with other children (2011, p. 5-6). What are some of the social hierarchies and power dynamics at play that children have to navigate with employers, children of employers, and in their families and community? Mary Romero argues that in accompanying their mothers, these children are socialized by helping their mothers clean, exposing them to their mother's work status and the reproduction of privilege. This is reflected in the narratives of the children who described the blurring of family and work when they accompany their mothers to work. Having to play with the children of employers and observing the bonds their mothers have with employer's children who mention the bond to provoke feeling of jealousy which they are not able to express (Romero 2011, p. 125).

She notes, “Domestic service is a source of knowledge for the workers’ children to learn the folkways, mores, norms, values and racial etiquette of class, gender, whiteness and citizenship. Rituals and practices of deference that characterize servitude are powerful tools of instruction to teach privilege…Workers’ children experienced spatial deference when they accompanied their mothers to work as helpers or as domestics themselves” (Romero 2001, p. 125). Additional research that looks into the active engagement of children in the arrangement of domestic work highlights the innovative ways Latina mothers participate in multiple income-earning strategies that “allow them to simultaneously earn money and care for their children,” incorporating them in informal vending and/or perform work alongside their children (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 551). Orellana argues that the work immigrant children (and the children of immigrants) of Mexican and Central American backgrounds do to help support and sustain their households and schools are active contributions in “our concern for their futures,” contrary to them being only seen as problems. Children actively participate in the work of daily life, caring for siblings, cleaning, mediating with public institutions, translating, and also participating in waged labor, indicating embodied impact on their body as well (2001, p. 374-76). Their experiences describe a collaborative relationship between mother and child, common throughout communities of color, and women of color in particular, who work in close proximity to their children in comparison to the middle-class model of mother-child isolation (Hill Collins, 1994). Hill Collins states that the embodiment of a mother’s work experience goes beyond survival—it offers simultaneous ways of being that provide tools to live quite differently (1994, p. 52- 59). They reveal aspects of the immigrant experience that are invisible when focusing only on adults,

offering us a glimpse of how children attach meanings to these arrangements and relationships, and the embodied knowledge that continuously informs the construction of particular kinds of childhoods and memories.

Conceptual Framework: Migration and the Embodiment of Pain and Memory

On Migration

The literature on migrant domestic workers relies heavily on the tendency to approach the immigrant experience in relation to their citizenship status. In her book *The Decolonial Imaginary*, Emma Pérez finds issue, for example, with the categories of "immigrant" and "work" and "gender", which she argues, do not historicize immigrants beyond workers "with little mention of their lives beyond the fields or factories". Domestic workers, in this sense, are "mostly perceived as exploited workers, along with men, in the labor market" (1999, p.18). Furthermore, a gender approach seeks to interrogate these limitations to locate women's exploitation in the labor market and within the family, Pérez also questions the tendency to homogenize understandings of the immigrant experience even when similarities between immigrant groups in the U.S. are made visible (1999, p.18-19). Even though her intent behind this question is centered around bringing new insights to better understand gender dynamics within Mexican immigration, Perez nevertheless invites scholars of immigration/diaspora studies to examine the racialization of different ethnic groups to more effectively transform the paradigm (1999, p. 19). I take this proposal further to echo the work of scholars who have widely challenged the construction of Central American transnational narratives and identities as they are perceived through Chicana/o subjective locations. While I agree with arguments that critique this subjective location as producing narrow representations of Central

Americans in the U.S. by foregrounding a Chicana/o political agenda (Rodriguez 2008), I side more with Alvarado's approach, examining the U.S. Central American immigrant experience through an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural analysis (2013). Alvarado challenges an authoritative voice on such experiences by highlighting the ways Central Americans and Chicana/os self-identify in relation to one another. In doing so, he also exposes and critiques processes of Americanization, Mexicanization, and even *Centroamericanidad* [6](Alvarado, 2013). This framework is especially relevant to Los Angeles, where the diverse Central American community continues to grow and transform the city, establishing a cultural, socio-political presence against a heavy Mexican American one. Furthermore, it might help nuance our understandings of the domestic worker labor force in Los Angeles as it has shifted to being predominantly Central American in comparison to Mexican immigrant workers as it once was. I examine the domestic worker experience using these approaches while attentive to the ways histories of U.S. imperialism, armed conflict, displacement, and immigration policy are accounted for in labor struggles. The identity categories of "immigrant" and "domestic worker" that circulate workers in addition to the categories of "1.5" and "second-generation" imposed on children can be important indicators of migration and its relation to certain histories. However, these chronological accounts of historical memory

6 Alvarado explains that "While the US Census categorizes Central Americans within an umbrella term *and* by national region, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Nicaraguans, Hondurans, Panamanians, Costa Rican, Belizeans and its indigenous peoples such as Mayas and Garifunas do not necessarily ascribe to a pan-Central American identity […] the "Central American" label also blurs specific political histories and stratifications *across* and *within* Latino ethnic groups thus adding to the struggle for self-representation, while overdetermining slippages into Latinidad (and Centroamericanidad)" (2013, p. 369 emphasis not mine).

become challenged in their narratives.[7] Therefore, I approach migration not only as a process of physical displacement and mobility but also conceptually capable of carrying the disruptive potential to challenge structures of dominance while simultaneously privileging the possibility for reinvention of identities. It points to a contradictory move that displays the complexity of disidentification at moments when dissolving identity might mean negating the resistance of this particular community in the midst of redefining their presence. Emphasizing this contradiction can generate further insights into the immigrant experience as it relates to labor organizing and an attentiveness to the perspectives of a younger generation. This alternative approach perceives migration as both an embodied, material experience densely entangled and shaped by a particular context and history *and* a generative force that mobilizes collective imaginaries.

In *Migrant Imaginaries,* Alicia Schmidt Camacho describes the dilemma that many migrants confront when crossing borders, the trajectory of "leaving behind one national polity to assume a settled existence as citizens of another" as conferring the embodied experience of feeling "ni de aquí ni de allá/neither from here nor there" (2008; also see Zavella, 2011). This ontological standpoint is challenged as a site where migrants are able to reconfigure their narrative in ways that reflect their lived realities of

[7] Such processes include the use of the category "1.5 generation" by scholars to describe the social status of immigrants who migrated as children (versus adults), for example, to differentiate relationships to legal consciousness and claims-making (Abrego, 2011) relationship between acculturation and mobility (Rumbaut, 2008) and maintenance of transnational ties (Menjivar, 2002). I am critical of this category for imposing a reductionist model that reifies nationalist ideals of citizenship, territory and memory, diminishing younger generations' power to construct their own versions of history in relationship to their diverse experiences to "home" and in ways that contest nationalism, racism, and patriarchy.

being *in both places at once*, defying contained and unitary identities, as mentioned above.[8] This simultaneity also offers the opportunity to bring the transnational experience into the construction of narratives, and grant it the power to uphold a perspective that is informed by shifting global processes and differing interpretations of history, space, and time.[9] While I privilege this simultaneity for widening the possibilities for alternate figurations to take place, I propose thinking about simultaneity also as intimately describing the domestic worker experience, specifically the practice of domesticity as performance—an embodied act that demands its simultaneous absence, in a "site of surveillance"[10] operating to enhance productivity. This performative act reveals a work experience that is highly nuanced and very difficult to calculate, especially in the context of the domestic worker movement and its continued efforts to legislate and enforce labor protections. This nuanced performative act also draws in the children of workers who accompany them in their work journeys, who come to experience the embodied effects of this experience in ways that help us understand domestic work as a site where productivity and value is momentarily set aside, and transformation of relations can take place. They bring us into the rhythm of their mother's work routine as they experience it,

[8] This reconfiguration of being in two places at once is also discussed by Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) in the context of understanding the meanings of transnational motherhood among Latina immigrant domestic workers in Los Angeles, described as "I'm Here, But I'm There."

[9] I would like to add here that while the ontological location of being both "here and there" has been widely favored as a firmer stance against the logics of citizenship and nationalism, scholars have also critically analyzed it as an experience that the global, neoliberal state has already capitalized on via developmentalist migration policies (such as in the case of El Salvador) and the management of mobility for migrant labor production. See Wiltberger (2014).

[10] See: Lyon, D. (2012). *Surveillance Studies: An Overview*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

while gesturing a nomadic slowness of things, so as to place us in-between and transform our perspectives of their labor and bodies. The embodied simultaneity of the immigrant embedded in a highly accelerated, strictly routinized, and exploitative work experience, describes a multidimensional understanding of migration as a process mediated by systemic power inequalities and the worker's relentless sacrifice to create possibilities. Perhaps Rosi Braidotti better articulates my approach toward understanding the embodied experience embedded in interconnected, contradictory sites, when she notes,

> It is urgent to both explore the need and to provide illustrations for new figurations, i.e., alternative representations and social locations for the kind of hybrid, sexualized nomadic subjects we are becoming. Figurations are not figurative ways of thinking, but rather more materialistic mappings of situated, embedded, and embodied positions. They derive from the feminist method of the "politics of location" and build it into a discursive strategy (2011, p.13).

Pain with its spatial and time dimensions (shifting between past and future) can contribute to our interpretation of how the domestic worker experience is politically tied to certain histories, contemporary movements, and remembrances of home and displacement. I follow these routine representations such as how pain is structured to invoke law on its behalf, in addition to being used to describe loss in its many forms—separation from children and families, isolation, surveillance, restriction, and exclusion, all masked yet expressed through iterations of the body.

On Pain as Embodied Experience

Pain can be understood as a bodily experience that is influenced by relationships and institutions and provide the ability to define a social world through the power of language and embodied expressions that communicate particular metaphors describing pain and its language of everyday (Good, 1992). In doing so, it allows us to understand pain and its

nomadic potential—on one hand understand how it becomes interpreted and on the other, reflect on what gets left out. This effect of figures and shadows, moving between here and there and animating contradictions is the power that pain offers. The sensory memory of pain becomes known in exile, through movement and social transformation—its unevenness directs us to the stillness and of what becomes buried, discarded, and forgotten from the social landscape that becomes visible and sensed through its ruptures and entanglements with everyday life (Seremetakis, 1994). It takes us to instances and places where *transfiguration is possible*—a process of becoming, a way of knowing that acknowledges the condition of being neither/ here and there; it problematizes attachments to land, domesticity, nation, identity, and embraces desire as a force driven by transformation.

The domestic worker experience demands constant negotiation with structures, meanings, relationships, rules of power specific to a culture of racialized, sexualized and gendered servitude. It requires the domestic worker to make the labor visible, as long as their body disappears into the experience that their labor creates. A worker once explained to me this dynamic when she shared a comment her employer had expressed to her after returning to clean his house after some time she took off to recover from an illness. She recalls him saying, "I'm so glad you're back—every time you clean the house you leave a scent behind, and when I come home, I come to a house that is clean because I can still sense you, through that scent, and tell myself—"She is still there."(personal communication, April 2016). Carla's observation of her employer sensing her presence even when she was not there revealed a process of hypervisibility that although it did not require her body, the idea of it was enough to structure her appearance through racial and

gendered gazes common in domestic work. She explained that his preference for her among other workers was a result of her attention to detail, her ability to do everything he wanted without being told. I found this scenario common in many descriptions of the domestic worker experience, where workers are continuously figured within the white imaginary as docile and subservient in a context that continues to have a hold of their bodies even when they are not physically there. It requires cleaning homes and caring for individuals, with the expectation that you leave part of your body behind. And it requires a witness, someone who might carry that part with them, with uncertain means in sight. This embodied dispossession is transformed into a process that reworks our orientation to social injustice and resistance. This process of working through pain and the work of its memory will allow the space for contradictions to reside, where the domestic worker experience is figured as multifaceted, everchanging, yet always politically situated and constituted. It will also make present the space between how organizers narrate their work experiences in the context of demanding rights and how the children articulate and come to understand and negotiate those same experiences along with their mothers. The purpose is not to emphasize the idea that we can get closer to a "truth" but rather to point to how representations carry strategically aligned parameters that figure the body as unitary against a system, injured, in need of protection; it also draws attention to the way these experiences are figured by the children, perhaps in pain but in a sense in control of its effects and colluding with the desires of the children as they imagine them in the future. I want to highlight the contradictions in both figurations, not claiming to offer an "authentic" portrayal but rather putting forward an account that hopefully embraces

possibilities for approaching the lived realities of domestic workers in their complexed, multifarious and entangled characteristics.

I approach pain as an embodied experience, a narrative, and a political standpoint, a theoretical provocation that has the potential of destabilizing law and reason. Privileging the body and the ways in which pain undermines the expectations and limits of our movements and representations challenges a conventional interpretation of our body or our expectation of how it should work and feel. In the context of migrant, domestic work and activism, a theoretical perspective on pain can also demonstrate how pain is politically structured to invoke law on its behalf, while simultaneously assuming a normative embodiment that can become stigmatizing. Rethinking embodiment itself makes evident not only varying embodied experiences, but also provides ways to dialogue and move with pain that simultaneously go against the conditions that made it possible in the first place. The manner in which pain communicates itself, its language, its movement, its (re)appearances, its palpable expressions insists on questioning what we mean by individual experience and collective memory. Can we perceive a worker's labor as something that is experienced rather than consumed and discarded, or as something that marks bodies, spaces and memories? How can those perspectives contribute to further strengthening a local and transnational movement of domestic workers towards dignity and rights? Gendered disciplinary measures that domestic workers experience and the heterogenous ways they resist evoke unique narratives of pain that disrupt representations of migrant bodies as passive victims entrapped in trauma. The experience of pain may also give the ability to define a social world through the power of language and embodied expressions that communicate particular metaphors that describes pain and

its language of everyday (Good, 1992). The theoretical proposition is that the experience of pain, as it communicates a narrative that resists conventional paradigms, can allow us to understand how the body experience is influenced by relations of domination but also as a condition for possibility (Csordas, 1995). Further, I am interested in how the body resists localization of pain and rather rearticulates culture, community, and self, in opposition to how normalized representations of laboring bodies are conceptualized—grounded in notions of maternalism, as innately caring, or always exclusively identified in relation to state-sanctioned family structures. An approach that takes a more complex view of pain as the core of its analysis offers the idea that our body is never really ours, that our pain as expressed through narrative should not assume an inevitable or inherent desire to alleviate pain but rather a possibility of transforming pain into a creative process. This creative process renders it possible to perceive pain and healing not just as an individual experience, but one that is collectively transformative in releasing the condition of pain (Scarry, 1985). The embodied experience of migrant, domestic workers and how they negotiate the labor of their occupation and their activism is heavily occupied with locating and negotiating pain into effective activist tools. Contemplating varying perspectives on the experience of pain can yield new articulations that may push against the boundaries of how pain is usually rationalized. The local, particular flow of experience is in turn manipulated by the machinery of the state and law, and even western knowledge, as it undergoes a process of delegitimation and religitimation.

Pain has been theorized in varying contexts; highlighting each viewpoint can offer different directions where pain can take us. In *Pain as a Human Experience* (1992), Good points to multiple ethnographic approaches that seek more effective ways of describing

and analyzing the human context of pain. These approaches detach themselves from medicalized perspectives[11] and instead focus on how varying social contexts communicate a narrative that resists and defies conventional meanings. Good notes that pain is not always communicated as a problem for which something must be done. Pain can allow us to understand how the bodily experience itself is influenced by meanings, relationships, and institutions (Good, 1992, p. 7). For example, the view that work produces the conditions of pain can be disrupted if we also imagine work as functioning as a space where pain transforms into new meanings. This can be seen in the ways workers describe domestic work as a sort of escape, a landscape that allows them to improvise and create something new with their labor. This perspective disrupts the universal image of the domestic worker body in perpetual pain and suffering that might inspire different ways of seeing pain that neither renders the pain visible nor makes it the only valid experience of workers. The meaning of pain, as domestic workers express it, is not strictly framed as a problem. Rather, their narratives reflect a lived experience influenced by mechanisms of power and control that demands a distinction in the cultural and social processes that create different embodiments of pain, and the differing ways it can be expressed. While theorizing embodiment might run the risk of losing sight of the body (Csordas, 1995, p. 4), the cultural context within which pain is understood can reclaim the body from the restrictions of discourse itself.

[11] An example of such medicalized perspectives of pain that focus on physical injury in the context of work is Flores and Deal's study "Work-related Pain in Mexican American Custodial Workers" (2003).

The political economy of pain and how relations of power and domination shape the body need to be contextualized in order to see the lived experiences and the cultural forms that inform the collective memory of domestic work. These experiences are reflective of a colonial legacy of servitude that carries with it a culture of pain that informs the historical experience of migrant, domestic work and the ways those meanings become linked, embodied and expressed. As Csordas notes, personal identity and its appropriation of bodiliness is problematic, as it becomes individualistic and obscures social dilemmas (1995, p. 30). The suggestion is to probe into what mediates the social relationships around pain, and what occasions have solicited for an encounter that demands meaning and requires an explanation. An example of this could be the ways employers and their children remember the close relationships they had with domestic workers, and how their sentimental (oftentimes discomforting) recollections of close attachments erase marks of coercion and exploitation. Pain in the context of care work, for example, shifts the social relationships around pain as workers are forced to enter intimate relationships that enslave them to the physical, emotional pain of the bodies they care for. On the other hand, pain can be used on behalf of workers to emphasize how physical pain as a result of injury in the workplace demands explanation to the occupational hazards that surround their labor.[12] While organizations and movements towards achieving rights for domestic workers use physical and emotional injury as a way to highlight the urgent need of workplace and human rights protections, the undocumented status and racialization of the labor force limits the visibility and

[12] I would also add here the importance of looking at how those vulnerable conditions reflect the uneven power relations that inscribe worker's bodies in particular ways.

possibility of the demands of this pain to materialize. The pain that initially characterizes the pain of workers becomes co-opted by employers and cast as markers of disposability. The memory and experience of pain that the children of domestic workers inherit enter these conversations and provide alternate interpretations to how these cultures of pain surrounding the experience of domestic work are arranged and provided meaning.

In *The Culture of Pain* (1991), Morris speaks to the differing political, historical, social narratives that intimately influence the perceptions and behaviors towards pain. Morris forces us to rethink pain and suggests understanding pain as not only strictly belonging to the mechanisms of the body, or even as projected spiritual suffering. He rather seeks to think about the way pain as an experience can be tied to a history of state-sanctioned repression that allows for only certain types of pain to matter. Morris's notes that the mysteriousness[13] of pain always slips away from a process of naming and explanation. He speaks of the continuous attempt to embed privileged notions of how pain should be understood, expressed, controlled, or represented. The mysterious and migratory aspects of pain make it difficult to understand the shifting notions of pain and the individual and collective desires that influences them. Who is choosing the terms by which we can have conversations on pain? The narratives of pain that are continuously given space and legitimacy versus those that continue to be denied illustrate the social dominant narratives that are influencing the direction of how pain should be interpreted. As Morris notes, "taking back responsibility for how we understand pain we can recover

[13] On the mystery of pain: "Mysteries, in resisting closure and in retaining an essential openness, refuse to yield up every quantum of their darkness to research or to bright ideas. Instead they introduce us to unusual states of being which for a time, we enter into and dwell within" (Morris, 1991, p. 24).

the power to alleviate it" (1991, p. 5). The weight of the pain children carry, and their experience as to how they have witnessed their mothers interpreting those moments allows the space to rethink those memories as empowering components that provide the ability to search for meanings that do not use pain as a site of mechanized control. The violence of not being able to choose at least our meanings to pain, as intimate our acquaintance with it, strips it of its significant cultural power to use pain as a medium to involve others to experience the transformative aspects of that pain.

The purpose of considering perspectives on embodiment and pain is not to further stigmatize the bodies of migrant women who are racially excluded from a labor system that is upheld by state, global policies and prevailing stereotypes of migrants as poor, suffering, non-agential, vacuous, non-educated bodies that are only "good" for disposable labor. This feminization of poverty and migration further entrenches migrant workers into systems of exclusion and marginalization. Other scholars have pointed out the need to focus solely on empowering agendas and representations of workers, and that as activist scholars we should move alongside a movement that already practices visions for social justice. Rosi Braidotti for example, argues against what she calls necrological stances in scholarly criticism that obsesses on vulnerability, violence, wounds, pain, and suffering, and suggest that our efforts should rather be on political activism, affirmation, and life as a "relentlessly generative force" (142). Borrowing from Deleuze and Nietzsche, Braidotti affirms the need to move beyond pain by activating it and working through it collectively (146)[14]. Responding to conditions of violence allows pain to be transformed along with

[14] "The obligation of witnessing includes the practice of 're-memory,' which is Toni Morrison's term for practices that concretely encourage people to affirm life in the face

the body and its extension with others. What must be considered are the ways in which pain experienced today might somehow be depoliticized from the mechanisms that have contributed to the violence of that experience through time.

Securing legal recognition that represents domestic work as an invisible, undervalued workforce composed of mostly migrant, disadvantaged women, affirms the need for rights but also necessitates questioning what becomes compromised in the midst of being delineated as subjects before the law. The language of pain and its role in reversing the doubts about domestic worker's vulnerability to state sanctioned violence becomes, As Das would note, detached from the pain's relation with culture and the ways it has evolved and been shared (1996, p. 88). Seeking new meanings to pain that has been shared implicates our ways of being into a daily questioning of how it comes alive through its impact on workers and their extended community. Can pain and its memory be made distinct or be separated from the landscape of the workplace/home, so as to give justice to the grief that continues to rewrite itself in multiple languages and spaces? The changing relationship between domestic workers and the law might bring workers into new forms of precarity that will expose them to new challenges. What kind of memory for the future is being made while the bodies of women are inscribed with the patriarchal, colonial desires of international political structures, with their strict focus on "*specific characteristics of domestic work*" and where measures are expected to be applied

of death, to hold onto feelings of both connection and disconnection, and to stay wide enough awake to attend to the requirements of just recollection and affirmation and the path of facing who we are, and what we become" (Das and Kleinman 2001, in Minow 1998:147)

"*progressively*"?[15] It is here where we return to the body and its senses to reinterpret what those challenges might be, and how an analysis that returns to pain might imagine new spaces of experiencing and remembering the domestic worker experience. Pain inspires movement, activism, and acknowledgement, but does not transform the mechanisms that continue to interpolate workers into mediated potentialities unevenly distributed within systems of economic, racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, and cultural domination. Deviating from modernizing instructions to contain experience, the goal is to create a disposition (and not simply a new narration) to encourage new spaces of experience that implicate the body and challenge the characteristics that totalize identities (Frykman, 1994, p. 65). Seremetakis' book *On Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity* (1994) offers valuable presences that highlight such spaces of experience away from the centrality of perceptual effects, and existing in the margins where modernity "is an unfinished and contested hegemony" (vii). She alludes to a sensory memory that becomes known in exile, through movement and social transformation—its unevenness direct us to the stillness of what becomes buried, discarded, and forgotten from the social landscape that becomes visible and sensed through its ruptures and entanglements with everyday experience (Seremetakis, 1994). The social, cultural amnesia that creates zones of "privatized, inadmissible memory and experience" grows in tandem with a reproduction of selective memory split between public and private spheres

[15] In the summary of what C189 contains, Celia Mather notes: "Many of the provisions mention the "*specific characteristics of domestic work*." Some say that the measures can be applied "*progressively*." It is true that in many countries new approaches may need to be developed for domestic workers to enjoy all of their employment rights. But we need to keep up the pressure so that such words are not used so as to hamper progress" (74-75).

revealing the ways by which experience is organized around the "reproduction of inattention" that denies its vitality (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 19-20). This line of thought offers a fruitful direction in the goal of re-centering the body as a symbolic force in helping bring out the complexity of pain and its absences. The memory of pain carries spatial and time dimensions that reflect how it becomes interpreted, and what gets left out. Senses further contribute historical interpretation that connects the domestic worker experience to a contemporary struggle routinely defined by the remembrances of migration, displaced notions of home, and a sense of unity at describing loss in many forms—separation from children and families, loss of community, all intertwined and expressed through iterations of the body.

Methodological Framework

Critical Feminist Ethnography

The central concern of this paper are the embodied experiences of domestic work through the perspective of pain. Memory, therefore, will be the methodological tool used to approach the multiple dimensions of pain within the context of activism in the urban setting of Los Angeles. Ethnographic observation around this embodied concept and its sensorial, social, institutional, and imaginative realms might represent "a bridging practice that can activate a sense of "togetherness" and a tool for making sense of the presence of everyday violence" (Riaño-Alcala, 2000, p. 2). According to Truc, sociologists of memory should pay attention to how sites of memory undergo contradictory movements—the "memorialization" (and I would add embodied) dimensions of original places of an event, the institutionalization of official places of

memory (using symbolic setting and representations), and the "domestic" sites of remembrance very much resist and/or undergo a process of reshaping and forgetting (2011, p.150). My research design unfolded with these movements in mind and recognized that memory undoubtedly moves between defined methods of data collection in specific sites. Memory presents the opportunity to make referential contexts of worker's testimonies more visible, dissolve generational walls, and outline the importance of new forms of remembering through the trans-generational, migratory, embodied aspects of pain. Acknowledging pain in a way that gives agency to its imaginative, transitory possibilities allows us to better inhabit the growing significance of the domestic worker movement today.

The methodological approach to this research is qualitative and employs a critical feminist ethnographic design. Qualitative research is the study of one or a small number of cases, over a lengthy period of time with the purpose of understanding the meanings that people have of the world around them and how these meanings influence their actions (Henn et al., 2009, p. 175-176). The research design includes archival research, participant observation and in-depth interviewing. A feminist ethnographic design is relevant to answering my research questions pertaining to how the individual and collective domestic worker experience and resists normalized narratives mediated by immigration policies and law that tend to individualize the collective memory of the social movement and neglect historical trajectories. Ethnography constitutes the exploration of culture and subculture through application of qualitative research methods designed to produce thick descriptions (McNamara, 2009, p.164). These thick descriptions are derived from observing social interaction and talking informally to group

members to acquire cultural knowledge and identify and make sense of patterns of social interaction in peoples natural environment (Hammersley, 1992, in Henn et. al., p. 197). A critical approach to this study will address processes of injustice "within a particular *lived* domain" by looking at beneath surface appearances, disrupting the *status quo*, and unsettling both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions that highlight underlying operations of power and control (Madison, 2012, p. 5). Key to a critical approach in ethnography is challenging institutions and regimes of knowledge, and social practices that "limit choices, constrain meaning, and denigrate identities and communities" (Madison, 2012, p. 6). Resisting this process will entail, for an ethnographer, using the resources available to break through the confines that limit and/or erase the experiences and memories of individuals and communities.

Including a feminist approach allows the researcher to add another dimension that is not included as part of conventional field methods, which is acquired by "…continuously and reflexively attending to the significance of gender as a basic feature of all social life" in order to document the lives and activities of women to understand them from their point of view and to conceptualize their behavior as an expression of social contexts (Reinharz and Davidman, 1992, p. 46-51). A feminist ethnographic approach will provide the appropriate pathways from which I "…attempt to place specific encounters, events, and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context"—a process and a product in which ethnographer's lives are embedded within their field experiences (Tedlock, 2000, p. 165). This meaningful context will negotiate what Patricia Hill Collins notes are the patterns of race and gender in the dehumanization of Black women's labor and their treatment as "objects" and "living machines" that are "part of

the scenery" (2000, p. 43). This core theme in Black feminist thought challenges modern-state constructs of the family and labor that hold contradictory locations of oppressions and cultures of resistance in Black women's lives, and the divisions between paid and unpaid labor "characterized by sex-segregated gender roles" (Collins, 2000, p. 46-47). Politics of empowerment, according to Black feminist thought, suggests always having the power to have ownership, the power to act, and the power to organize collectively against political and economic institutions that attempt to control structures of knowledge and distort and exclude women's experiences. Feminist approaches that take into account race, gender, class, and sexuality will be complemented with Rosi Braidotti's "nomadic vision of memory as becoming" as a methodological tool that both activates and destabilizes identities, the sanctity of the past, and the authority of experience (2011, p. 228-229). Accounting for such identities means acknowledging the work that scholars of color have contributed to building intersectionality as an open-ended meeting point, a mobile *reading practice*[16] that takes into account the multiple ways race defines gender and shapes structural, political, and representational aspects of violence, especially as they pertain to women's experiences in labor and their engagement with identity politics in social movements (Crenshaw, 1991; Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 2013).

[16] In her book *Ruptures of American Capital: Women of Color Feminism and the Culture of Immigrant Labor* (2006), Grace Kyungwon Hong describes this reading practice as an important intersectional, moving strategy for better understanding globalization and its role in the reorganization of cities, racialized displacement, segregation, criminalization, and the incorporation of immigrant women into the service sector. She emphasizes the movement component as one that ""makes sense of" these links as they continue to displace nationalist ideals of liberal capitalism (individuated citizenship, property) and to highlight a women of color feminist practice as being situated within such genealogy while marking "the forms of racialized and gendered difference that such a genealogy depends on but cannot account for" as they are understood through culture (2006, p. xii).

Methods

I conducted archival research at several research libraries that carried documents on domestic worker organizing and coalitional networks in Los Angeles. I reviewed these documents in order to establish an understanding of how worker centers/collectives organized their movement and activist agendas; in the archives, I also searched for testimonies of migrant workers, while also attempting to establish a comprehensive, historical context of the shifting legal and social discourses on labor rights and how they intertwine with other discussions around women's political involvement. The archival libraries include the Southern California Library, The Labor Archives and Research Center at San Francisco State University, the Central American Studies Virtual Archive and Library, and the Huntington Library. Attending to the multi-sitedness of voices and actions in collective labor organizing challenges the reductive mechanisms that erase the multivocality within texts and the interpretive differences when theorizing memory and it shapes lived experience (Blackwell, 2011). Collections of documents in homes, material objects, print cultures, recorded interviews, and photographs were also researched to seek the multiple forms in which domestic workers articulated their experiences.

I also conducted participant observation in worker centers where migrant domestic workers (both from Mexico and Central America) engaged in organizing and activist practices. I focused primarily on IDEPSCA (Instituto de Educacion Popular del Sur De California), as they had the most active collective in Los Angeles. I built trust with this organization after having participated in popular education workshops that workers had organized in 2013. These workshops were centered around combating social

inequalities from the perspective of immigrants and their children, who were also health promoters and organizing for immigration reform and the rights of day laborers and household workers. I participated in a series of workshops for a month where workers shared and wrote their own stories and published them in their digital media project *Vozmob* (short for *Voces Móviles/Mobile Voices*). It was during this period that I gained rapport from workers and their digital media project organizer. We connected immediately through this practice of storytelling and the sharing of our individual stories of migration, family, labor, and our collective desire for social justice and transformation. As a result, when I returned to Los Angeles in 2015 I was able to easily regain access to the space despite a change in leadership within the organization. I began my participant observation for this research through my participation in rallies, bus rides and lobbying efforts with IDEPSCA from 2015-2018. The bus rides with domestic workers traveling from Los Angeles to Sacramento, California were to rally at the State Capitol for the passing of the domestic workers rights bill, before its passing and after to make the bill permanent. While there, I also engaged in lobbying efforts with CHIRLA (Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles), among others. I also attended key demonstrations throughout Los Angeles and more private gatherings where domestic workers representing collectives and organizations throughout Los Angeles convened to dialogue about the future of the movement. Attending these meetings, events, and demonstrations allowed me to understand and illuminate their collective yet diverse visions on how to further empower domestic workers. It was during this process that workers shared their stories of pain and how they remembered and interpreted their migrant experience as women involved in domestic work. The role that women have

taken in new forms of organizing and the strategies developed to address their specific working conditions impel us to examine current historical, economic, and social conditions that are influencing new directions in organizing. Specifically, this process uncovers more complex forms of migration and identities that are changing the face of organizing and how this activism is performed and experienced across borders and generations.

During this time period of participant observation focused on the statewide movement for a CA-DWBR, I conducted in-depth interviews with three key organizers from Mujeres en Acción (MEA), the household workers collective within IDEPSCA. These interviews were composed of experiences, narrative and stories, and encompassed three forms: (1) *oral history*, which is a recounting of a social historical moment reflected in the life or lives of individuals who remember them and/or experienced them; (2) *personal narrative* which is an individual perspective and expression of an event, experience, or point of view; and (3) *topical interview*, the point of view given to a particular subject, such as a program, an issue, or a process (Madison, 2012, p. 28). These modes of telling also carry social and space referents that help organize narratives of memory—institutional (politics and ideology, unions, the state), collective (the workplace, the neighborhood, collective participation) and personal (family, children, the home), which overlap and are combined into meaningful patterns (Portelli, 1994, p. 166-167). Interviews were 2-4 hours long each and included one additional 3-hour group interview where all three organizers collectively discussed the future of domestic worker organizing within their organization. I used pseudonyms to protect the identities of my participants, and shared transcripts of interviews with participants for review and

acknowledgement. I offered reciprocity as a researcher to IDEPSCA by volunteering hours helping translate materials from Spanish to English, and also offered hours to help organize the organization's historical documents currently being housed at their main office location. Due to my recent relocation from Los Angeles, I have been unable to continue this archival work but remain in communication with them so that I can continue to volunteer during my short visits to the city.

Thirdly, I also conducted in-depth interviews with the adult children of domestic workers. I found my participants by using a snow-ball sampling technique whereby initial respondents were asked to recommend additional adult children of domestic workers who might agree to be interviewed. Initial respondents were neighbors and school friends who then referred me to additional participants. Criteria for inclusion in the study were that they must be 18 and over, have a Central American and/or Mexican immigrant background, and have a recollection of experiences accompanying their mothers to work cleaning houses. Building trust was not difficult due to my Mexican immigrant background, my lengthy involvement in campus and community organizing within the Central American community, and my personal experience accompanying my mother to clean houses since I was a child. All of my participants agreed immediately upon learning the purpose of my research and its focus on children's experiences with domestic work. They expressed never being asked about their stories and processing how it has shaped who they are today was something that intrigued them as well. In total I conducted 10 in-depth interviews with adult children of domestic workers in Los Angeles, each about 2-6 hours long between 2015-2017. All participants were women with the exception of one participant who identified as non-binary, their ages ranging from their mid 20s to their

early 30s. All of them had graduated from high school and were in college either beginning or completing their undergraduate degree. Out of the ten, only three had been actively involved in immigrant and worker's rights organizing. Participants chose the locations of interviews, which varied from participant's own homes, to local parks and coffee shops. Many times, the interviews extended across several sites. I used pseudonyms to protect their identities and also shared transcripts of their interviews for review and acknowledgement. I extended reciprocity as a researcher to these participants by offering my support in any way that I could. Some participants have reached out for support in their applications for graduate school and to stand as a reference for job applications. Overall, most did not ask for anything and simply wanted a continued friendship in return. Until this day, I remain in contact with all my participants and continue to receive phone calls from them, as well as invitations for birthday and family celebrations.

The act of speaking on behalf of memory is not something that may be easy to recount, and therefore the interviewing process was exploratory in quality. Children of domestic workers were asked open-ended questions about their mother's work, memories that they still carry about their experiences joining/working alongside their mothers, their thoughts on the mobilization of domestic workers for workers' rights, and questions around family history. They were also asked how they continue to experience the memory of their mother's labor, and how they envision their mother's work as they speculate about the future. This process generated multiple productions of memory that can be shared not only through familial or organizing groups but as traversing bodies, communities, and time. Attending to narratives as *embodied* (sensorial-corporeal),

situated (history, power, language, culture), *discursive* (conditions that frame what can be said and by whom), and *legitimation/critique* (expose, break open unjust systems) were key for critically interpreting the meanings, functions, and implications of the interviews (Langellier & Peterson, 2004 in Madison, 2012, p. 37). All interviews were analyzed and color coded by hand using themes such as family migration and transnational experiences, childhood memories at employers' homes, views on domestic worker rights, perspectives on their mothers' bodies and labor, and relationships with their mothers over time. I organized these themes according to luminous points that expose relationships and the context in which they were produced, while also acknowledging their changeability which eluded easy categorization. Altogether, these condensed themes created what I call a "constellation of shimmers," which I elaborate on in Chapter three.

Chapter Summary

This dissertation is inspired by the mobilization and campaigns for a domestic worker bill of rights that domestic workers across the country have organized for many years and my curiosity as to what forms of justice have been achieved as a result. In many ways, their visibility and fight for dignity for worker and immigrant rights inspired me to personally question, reflect, and investigate further this experience as it is intimately tied to the lived experiences of my mother and most women in my extended family and community. Examining multi-layered voices that disrupt traditional models of agency, visibility, and resistance makes diverse forms of resistance and memory available. My proposition is to ask what can be learned from the worker's movement, and vice versa—what can the worker's movement learn from those not directly involved in organizing? What can the

narratives of the children of domestic workers introduce to this conversation as it relates to their important roles in transnational family arrangements, contributions to work dynamics in the home, and perspectives on the embodied memory of their mother's work experience?

I begin by examining the landscape of domestic worker organizing for worker's rights in Los Angeles by analyzing the ways they conceptualize their movements around demands for dignified labor and immigration reform, providing a critique on what gets abstracted in worker and immigrant rights discourse. I argue that their demands for protections and rights force them into a contradictory space that perpetuates vulnerability and recasts illegality. It also opens up conversations on the ethnic and racial politics of representation. The reemergence of diverse experiences with migration and labor as it pertains to amplified forms of displacement and surveillance complicate efforts that seek to reconfigure strategies for future organizing work. However, these transnational, contextual historical drifts also encourage a space where opportunities for revisiting historical events arise, particularly as they relate to Central American experiences of war, genocide, migration, refugee and sanctuary movements, and community organizing. The case of IDEPSCA, the organization I discuss in chapter 2, reflects this dynamic of being forced to reckon with such histories as they reposition their organizing efforts after the DWBR was passed in 2014 and the recent election of Donald Trump. In order to more accurately tackle emerging trends that the local, predominantly Central American community is fighting as they interrelate to their work experiences, IDEPSCA is shifting their strategies to better prepare the next generation of activists.

Second, I focus on the experiences of the adult children of domestic workers who have accompanied their mothers to workplaces for most of their lives. Their stories offer overlooked insights into the ways their mother's labor is intimately tied to various forms of violence. I continue my discussion on how legal reasoning is embodied through the representation of workers organizing by examining how the (now adult) children of workers narrate their experiences of domestic service using a different language and set of metaphors. Although their stories do reflect a vulnerability that can be normalizing, their understandings are more intimately tied to ways of knowing that move beyond victimizing their mother's bodies to enable an ever-changing perspective of the ways their labor has radically transformed homes, livelihoods, and transnational spaces. Their stories project a more speculative vision of their mother's labor and its impact as it continues to build the foundations for a future where their children will not have to do the work that they do, and a future where their families are once again reunited. This centers the immigrant experience, as it pertains to women's work and its questioning of gender roles, as important contributors to the production of memory across borders. It anchors children as vital participants in the making of that history and not representatives of a less "authentic" cultural memory. Their perspectives vary, reflecting the types of relationships they had with employers, mothers, and family, offering us a rich contradictory space from where to further theorize the limitations on the politics of recognition. They offer an alternate, open-ended historicity where domestic workers are to be understood as nuanced figures with complex, unresolved visions for the future.

Third**,** I conclude by discussing the possibilities for envisioning domesticity as a nomadic landscape where we can account for the erosive forces of time and build a future

landscape “where other forms of identification and social relations become imaginable” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 26). Although the literature on domestic workers lingers within the parameters of rights and identity-based frameworks that create openings for material benefits to workers, we have yet to dialogue with the production of alternate, cultural sensibilities to this experience. Here, I expand on the themes presented in the previous chapter on the perspectives of the children by highlighting the profound implications for resisting the disposability and erasure of immigrant labor. By resisting how certain spaces attempt to “translate” migrant women of heterogeneous backgrounds into monochromatic domestic workers” (Lorente, 2017), a possibility for the future can be made where the repetitive, uncreative, and demeaning aspects of domestic work are pried apart from western, colonial arrangements of power. In presenting these conversations, I show that another mode for understanding domestic work can be had—one that acknowledges unresolved tensions, elicits sensorial memory, and resists the disappearance of bodies and labor without submitting completely to categories of recognition and (hyper)visibility.

Altogether, this dissertation is in itself a desire to inspire the construction of new sites that are mobilized by diverse histories, experiences, and insights that push against systems of enclosure and exploitation. It examines movement of not just ideas but also lived realities of displacement, migration, eviction, and deportation, and how these experiences continue to disrupt our connection to territory and contained spaces. It makes clear the spatiality of hegemonic discourses and concentrated nodes of social relations that together, continuously displace each other. By doing so, it encompasses the transnational immigrant experience of simultaneity as an empowering condition that can question neoliberal, individualist logics. My intent is to move beyond emphasizing social

movements and labor organizing as the only viable sites for enacting social change and for understanding the diverse experiences of domestic workers. This will allow me to take fragments of identities, senses, functions, roles and frame them into a new territory where at least through this dissertation, varying perspectives on the domestic worker's experience are bridged and reframed. This process will animate a way of understanding that begins with embodied and embedded relations, and reworks itself to provide a space of critique, differing interpretation and ongoing creation.

CHAPTER 2

THE WORKER'S BODY IN PAIN IN THE MOVEMENT FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS' RIGHTS

> Slavery here is a ghost, both the past and a living presence; and the problem of historical representation is how to represent that ghost, something that is and yet is not…
> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*

> Activism is an engagement with the hauntings of history, a dialogue between the memories of the past and the imaginings of the future manifested through the acts of our own present yearnings.
> Juana Maria Rodriguez, *Activism in the Ruins of Representation*

The house sat on 1565 W. 14th street near the corner of Pico Blvd. and Union Ave., a couple of blocks west from the Convention Center in Downtown Los Angeles. It was two floors and painted a dusty pink with wrought iron windows and block letters spelling out "IDEPSCA" curved over the entrance door. As I entered the building, I stepped into what looked like a sitting living room area with a kitchen on the right. That is where I met Sujey, whom immediately took me on a tour of the house. We made our way upstairs and sat in her office. As the executive director of the Instituto de Educacion Popular del Sur de California (Institute of Popular Education of Southern California), Sujey explained that the reason why the place looks like a house is because it is a house. "This used to be El Refugio, a shelter for refugees escaping the various civil conflicts in Central America in the 1980s. It's crazy to think but there were probably bunk beds in this office and in other rooms, and our bathrooms have showers. It's always been a space for the local community and especially the immigrant community from Central America and Mexico" (personal communication, January 2017). As we delved into a long conversation about the organizing work that takes place there with domestic workers, she explained that the

histories of U.S. intervention continue to haunt both their organizing space and the embodied memories of the workers. “I think now, at this current political moment, a lot of them are having to revisit a lot of that old trauma that maybe they had put aside for a number of years. And now thinking about why their legal status is the way it is, and how that’s sort of connected to that history, it absolutely informs our work.” She adds, “You can’t separate that sort of direct, experiential identity and the politics that come with it just because you’re working or organizing in a certain field. We hear it, we see it…we have to sort of unravel all of that together (personal communication, January 2017).

The emphasis on the embodied experience of migration as a starting point from which to begin organizing is characteristic of the mobilizing that takes place at IDEPSCA. In our conversation, Sujey signals a shift in organizing as many workers began to confront the uncertainty of their temporary legal statuses as a result of Trump’s zero-tolerance policies targeting immigrants across the country. Separating the histories that shape their legal statuses from their organizing work is not an option at IDEPSCA—historically, they have always centered their immigrant experiences as epistemological sites from where to transform the unequal social relations that they are caught in. Their work historically reflects a centering of the body from where their memory and knowledge traverse, and from where organizing takes place as immigrant workers who have tirelessly fought against the exploitation of their labor and their exclusion from spaces, resources, protections, and rights. *Mujeres en Acción* (MEA), their household worker collective, actively engages in these forms of organizing. They engage in participatory learning processes where they share their own realities, analyze the elements that constitute it, and seek to become authors of their own narratives. Their

narratives draw specifically on their embodied experiences of displacement and migration and understand them not as separate from their labor, but as forces that continue to shape their lived experiences through time. The organizing space at IDEPSCA where MEA gathers continues to create an intimate space that allows such histories to emerge, where power is collectively and creatively deployed in the service of social justice. The IDEPSCA house symbolically frames these collapsed histories and varied immigrant experiences that domestic workers continuously activate and alter. MEA's participation in the coalitional, state campaign for a domestic worker bill of rights reflects a stark contrast between the collective, transformational work that takes place within their collective and the larger goals of the DWBR movement.

Examining these histories and the ways domestic worker's bodies are narrated within resistance practices is crucial to understanding multiple (often contradictory) visions for justice and the sites of power in which these are produced. Domestic worker organizers in MEA described the tension between how they crafted strategies that rethought the politics of recognition and how statewide organizing advanced a coalitional campaign focused on representation and rights. In both cases, scenarios of visibility emerged where the body of the domestic worker, is figured as a body that is injured and in pain in order to make their claims hearable to the state and in order to validate their claims for protection. This process reveals, as Gedalof notes, the way power produces useful bodies even within resistance practices and can challenge how community is being imagined in terms of nation, ethnicity, race, religion, etc. and how this ties women to structures of reproductive labor that deny diverse forms of collectivity and becoming to emerge (2003, p. 93-94). Understanding the production of those "useful bodies" in the

movement for domestic worker rights through an analysis of their articulation of pain as an embodied experience can help problematize narratives that reinforce nationalist versions of history, migration, identity, citizenship, visibility, recognition, and protection via rights.

This chapter examines domestic worker organizing in Los Angeles from 2011-2018, a pivotal time under which domestic workers established a statewide and national movement to transform the occupation through a domestic worker bill of rights. It analyzes the strategies used to demand rights and explores how their narratives centered around the body in pain was central to the way they organized and developed their political agenda. Some questions that I ask are: How have domestic workers historically narrated their experiences, and who is mediating such accounts? In what ways are their bodies central to legitimizing their claims for protections and rights? What kind of visibility are they collectively organizing for themselves nationally today? What does the movement look like in California and Los Angeles specifically? How does it tie into and differ from the larger, more public campaign for rights, and what does this difference indicate? How are their organizing efforts in recent years problematizing the mechanics that erase the complexity of their working conditions, political leadership, and immigrant experiences and identities? Mapping organizational strategies and narratives of the movement can help highlight the power dynamics that reinscribe the worker as a useful, injured body in pain while simultaneously altering traditional modes of labor organizing that take their transnational, immigrant experience into account. I examine archival material, organizing strategies, and worker testimonies in order to trace how domestic workers articulated their experiences in their movement to demand rights. I do so by

offering a historical, legislative, and organizational analysis of the development of the movement and how it has emerged in Los Angeles and throughout California, as it interacted with previous strategies of organizing across temporal, sectoral, and legal sites.

The Movement for a Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights

The movement for a DWBR emerged as a result of intense grassroots organizing on behalf of immigrant workers who inherited a long legacy of organizing from both Black workers who have long fought to formalize domestic work into an occupation, and immigrant workers in the city who have historically mobilized to unionize workers in the service sector. Since 2000, domestic workers formed a state-wide labor movement that began in New York and bourgeoned into a national movement that has successfully won state protections and rights in the last decade. Domestic Workers United (DWU) was successful in organizing women from different ethnic groups such as South Asian, Filipina, and Caribbean. Initially two smaller organizations (Women Workers Project of CAAV and Andolan Organizing South Asian Workers), both began advocating for individual domestic workers experiencing wage theft or employer abuse, eventually collaborating to unite their efforts in 2000 as an entire workforce to establish larger goals and change. One of these goals was launched in 2003, which was a campaign to demand a Domestic Worker Bill of Rights in New York.[17]

[18] The Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights in NY gives workers the right to overtime pay, a day of rest, three paid days of rest each year after one year of work with the same employer, and protection under New York State Human Rights Law, and the creation of a special cause of action for domestic workers who suffer sexual or racial harassment. See www.labor.ny.gov/legal/domestic-workers-bill-of-rights.shtm (Last accessed 15 June 2016).

In 2006, Domestic Workers United published a comprehensive study of domestic workers and their working conditions in New York, what would later turn out to be the most successful strategy in advocating for worker's rights in New York. Titled *Home is Where the Work Is: Inside New York's Domestic Work Industry*, members of DWU conducted this study by collecting more than 500 surveys, documenting testimonies of the workers themselves, and gathering interviews with employers in the city (Domestic Workers United and Datacenter, 2006). According to the text, "Domestic workers, who are in the best position to identify research needs and relevant data about their industry, played a significant role in the design and analysis throughout this industry investigation" (2006, p. 4). Along with the support of the Datacenter, a social justice group aimed at bridging critical research with campaign strategies for community-based policy change, domestic workers joined together with the central goal of highlighting the low wages, worker abuse, demanding hours, health risks, difficulty maintaining families, conditions of poverty, racial discrimination, and immense contribution in sustaining New York's economy (Domestic Workers United and Datacenter 2006). These conditions are not only outlined along with numbers and graphs but are also given a voice by placing testimonies describing the details that the numbers point out. This is empowering in part because activists were able to disrupt myths about domestic workers being "part of the family," that they are not capable of organizing, and that the home is a private space and not a workplace. As Robin DG Kelley remarks, "What this startling document tells us is that the battles these women endure extend far beyond the rights of labor. They are immersed in a struggle for human rights and dignity; for immigrant rights and social justice; for the

dismantling of racism and globalization" (Domestic Workers United and Datacenter 2006, p. 9). This struggle—its voice, faces, and bodily experiences, is one specific to migrants who compose 99% of the workforce, 95% of whom are people of color, 93% are women, and three fourths who are not U.S. citizens (Domestic Workers United and Datacenter 2006). These narratives and numbers became vital tools of activism in their translation into recommendations for a domestic workers bill of rights, which was passed in 2010. In 2012, DWU released a guide titled *We Care!: Your Guide to the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights* which informs domestic workers of what they are entitled to under the bill and encourage them to exercise their rights (Domestic Workers United and Damon Locks, 2012). Multilingual and visually captivating, the guide opens up to an image of worker's hands at the center, with accompanying text detailing that the law applies to everyone regardless of immigration status, what rights the law protects, how to practice those rights, what employers are required to follow under the law, and additional laws in New York that also afford domestic workers additional labor protections.[18] Most importantly, the hands became a reminder of their work that in their words, "makes all other work possible."

The worker-center model became crucial to the development of the domestic worker movement and its goal of expanding both leadership and its capacity to challenge the immigration-labor regime. Organizations who undertook the worker-center model were more effectively able to address cases of worker abuse by supporting workers to

[19] These include the right to be paid at least minimum wage, right to a 30-minute lunch break for a workday of more than 6 hours, the right to complain about working conditions without being retaliated against, and worker's compensation for full-time workers.

take action against employers in court systems, and, in some cases, eventually win back wages (Boris and Nadasen, 2008). This model of organizing empowered immigrant, undocumented women not only to speak out but also become leaders in hopes of addressing larger issues affecting workers, their families, and communities. Such groups include CASA de Maryland (Central American Solidarity Association of Maryland) in addition to the DWU. Founded by Central American refugees fleeing wars in their country of origin, CASA de Maryland's focus was to address the needs of workers, especially women, and their rights as citizens despite immigration status. DWU is now part of NDWA (National Domestic Workers Association) and CASA is now a member of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network—both promoting comprehensive immigration reform. These sectoral worker center networks are reflective of a growing trend in labor organizing that aims at expanding organizational power by developing sector-targeted service strategies and exchanging best strategies while simultaneously also working as a social movement organization (Cordero-Guzmán, et al 2013). Domestic worker collectives who have engaged in this network have been able to expand their coalitions to include alliances with researchers, student-activists, workers in other service sectors, and have coordinated gatherings to help identify key challenges at strengthening organizational power. In California, this model of organizing carried a history that continues to shape the way undocumented, immigrant workers continue to mobilize today, particularly in Los Angeles.

The DWBR Movement in California

The DWBR victory in New York carried legal precedence in California, where a large number of domestic workers had also been organizing to demand worker rights. On the same day that the NY DWBR was signed into law, a coalition of worker organizers in California organized a press conference to celebrate and rally to continue the movement in another state. Domestic workers from several worker centers and collectives across the state became the driving force behind putting the DWBR in the legislature, a coalition that slowly formed into the California Domestic Worker Coalition (CDWC) with groups from the Bay Area and Los Angeles (Herrera, 2010). According to Shah and Seville, since the 1990s domestic workers had been organizing within immigrant rights organizations, where they worked collaboratively in their community to improve working conditions by focusing on immigrant rights and multi-ethnic coalition building (2011; 435). As Katie Joaquin, Campaign Director of the CDWC noted, “There is tremendous strength to link with other organizations. We knew that in order to win, we had to be grounded in the leadership of immigrant women and build the strength of coalitions. A lot of worker organizations have worked hard to shift the visibility and consciousness of domestic work… and the Bill, and the organizing of immigrant women also helped to shift the consciousness of policymakers" (Chitnis 2015). The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, Los Angeles (CHIRLA) and IDEPSCA were two organizations that employed the worker-center model and served the majority of Mexican and Central American immigrant workers in Los Angeles and mobilized them through advocacy, community education, and organizing.

During the 1990s, the socio-political landscape was driven by increasingly hostile anti-immigrant rhetoric and racialized xenophobia across the state due to Proposition

187,[19] the after effects of IRCA (Immigration Reform and Control Act) and increased immigration enforcement, growing demands for residency for Central American migrants, and neoliberal, economic restructuring of the labor market demanding low-wage, unregulated, outsourced labor. These labor demands were met by the most vulnerable, those excluded from IRCA and left without citizenship status with temporary legal statuses, and those who were denied asylum. As Coutin argued, these demands and statuses as shaped by immigration law increasingly established the terms through which (Salvadoran) immigrants who are in the United States without authorization negotiate their legal statuses; in particular, she notes that these terms continue to be reshaped by immigrants' actions through a reformulation of previous strategies in their community (1998). These strategies include the use of testimonies to galvanize consciousness of their experiences as refugees of a U.S.-sanctioned war and promote them as deserving of protections and rights (Coutin, 1998, p. 908). This created a framework of deservingness that ultimately produced policy changes permitting temporary outcomes. The state-legal response produced the previously mentioned "permanent temporariness" that gradually limited the geographic, economic, social, and political opportunities of a large number of Central American individuals and transnational families (Bailey et al., 2002). As immigrant rights reform efforts intersected with labor rights, their political strategies

[19] Proposition 187 passed in California in 1994, which targeted Latina immigrants and their children by denying them publicly funded resources such as public education and health care. Although ruled unconstitutional, this proposition targeting Latina immigrant women and children codified a racialized nativism that remained embedded in the socio-political, legal imaginary that later contributed to further racial hostilities and disenfranchisements of both legal permanent residents and undocumented immigrants. See Chang (2000) and Hondagneu-Sotelo (1997).

similarly became limited by the conditions of the legal categories that they were caught in, connected to debates over U.S. foreign policy, assessments of human rights violations in Central America, and the boundaries of citizen and state authority (Coutin, 1998). Those most excluded from those legal categories, were described as inhabiting sites of exception formed by the state through sovereignty, its citizenship apparatus and the denial of political and legal representation (Agamben 1995; 2003). Despite this, they continued to challenge the multitude of exclusions that were endemic to colonial legacies still transforming the service sector and the racial and gendered arrangements of labor as well.

The political economy in Los Angeles driven by the largest population of highly organized, predominantly Mexican and Central American undocumented workers developed the L.A. model of low-wage worker organizing, which characterized the next generation of rights-based social movements. This model emerged in Los Angeles during the aforementioned proliferation of low-wage work as a result of globalization, deregulation, and neoliberal economic restructuring which undermined labor law enforcement and outsourced labor to subcontractors marking a growing number of jobs a 'temporary" status as well, placing them beyond the reach of wage and hour law protections (Narro et al., 2010). This transformation of the labor market impacted the precarious arrangement of domestic work even further due to the widening income and wealth gap. In other words, the inequitable income distribution "set the stage for further expansion of domestic work" with Los Angeles holding the largest concentration of domestic workers and forming what Hondagneu-Sotelo calls the "New World Domestic Order" (2001; p. 6). This new world domestic order was reinforcing itself at a time when

an economic crisis devastated Mexico and U.S. funded wars ravaged Central America in the 1980s, drawing a link between globalization, U.S. imperialism, migration, transnational labor, and the imposition of a transnational neoliberal regime. Despite these odds, immigrant workers organized successful campaigns such as "Justice for Janitors" with leadership from social movements such as the United Farm Workers, and borrowed a mix of strategies from their campaigns to appeal to the morals of social justice in the midst of vast wealth of Los Angeles' affluent population (Narro et al., 2010; p. 7). Their coalition-building that occurred through extensive outreach to allies in churches and community-based organizations transformed relationships and "laid the groundwork for enduring ties with the growing immigrant rights movement" (Milkman 2006; p. 131-133 in Narro et al., 2010). Much of this network building is credited to the Central American community which was simultaneously caught in a struggle for refugee, residency, and citizenship after the passage of IRCA in 1986 both fueled their efforts to reach permanent residency and marked the beginning of a shift to intensive policing, detention, and deportation as a result of their temporary legal statuses and temporary, exploitative occupations.[20] This particular regional formation and its entangled histories of displacement, exploitation, and resistance are markers that continue to haunt the direction of domestic worker organizing, as they emerge in the movement for a domestic worker bill of rights.

[20] According to Bacon (2015), the passage of IRCA in 1986 which offered amnesty to millions of undocumented immigrants, dramatically impacted the central American immigrant community as they were largely excluded due to stipulations of arrival, and also negatively impacted their future due to the militarization of the border and further criminalization of immigrants through policing in the workplace.

This history of organizing is telling as it makes clear the connection between past immigrant and worker organizing victories and the recent embodied experiences of domestic workers organizing for rights. As the DWBR movement grew and interacted with an expanding coalitional network, they were left confronting the "half-sustained possibilities" of both the immigrant rights and worker's rights movements (Braidotti 2014). These *compromised possibilities* were emerging as migration shifts detailed the devastating destruction neoliberal free trade agreements had on both Mexico and Central America, and the desperate attempts of families escaping violence and seeking reunification. Coupled with the U.S.'s own speculated economic crisis in 2008 and the accompanying "state of insecurity" (Lorey 2015) that followed, Central Americans both in the U.S. and in their countries of origin were once again left fighting for the extension of their TPS status as deportations increased during the Obama administration and racial hostilities against immigrants intensified under Donald Trump. This also pointed to the historical regulation of the legal immigration process that discriminated against and disproportionately impacted Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, and Hondurans. The perpetual reassessment of their legal statuses across time pointed to a continuous scripting of their bodies as overly-determined—meaning, that although legal process continued to seek to "determine" the future of Central Americans impacted by temporary statuses, the state simultaneously placed them in a position that required them to narrate their deservingness for rights through testimonies that demanded they rationalize the dangerous conditions that continued to persist in their home country. This restricted the ways migrant workers were allowed to register the consequences of state terror (by placing stringent definitions on what constituted "persecution") and reformulate their

needs as they shifted with new generation of migrant workers and their children. It also forced them to present their traumatic experiences as "multiple nonexistences" while simultaneously hiding part of their identities to be accepted by heteronormative society (Coutin 2003). As a result, this perpetuated a hegemonic reading of "evil" or "backward" societies. It also had an impact on the changes that could be achieved as their claims for protections and rights limited them to the liberal belief of truth and justice as social change. Although they contributed monumentally to the empowerment of workers citywide despite these constraints, they were still disempowered through their marginalization within immigration reform demands.

Capacity as Compromised Potentiality

In her book, *The Right to Maim* (2017), Puar examines the historical, geographical, and legal parameters that shape and distinguish between disabled and non-disabled bodies. Defining disability not as a fixed state but as a process and relationship between assemblages of capacity and debility, Puar argues that "the globalization of disability as an identity through human rights discourses contributes to a standardization of bodily usefulness and uselessness that discounts not only the specificity of location but also the ways bodies exceed or defy identities and subjects" (2017, p. xiv). Borrowing from Deleuze and Guattari's notion that accidents and mutilated bodies as a result of wars waged by the state are losses that occurred long before they were visibly taken into account, Puar similarly puts forth an emphasis on the relations between state apparatuses, war machines, debilitation, and labor and the ways these disproportionately impact previously marked bodies preordained for injury, leading to labor exploitation, policing,

racist incarceration, and community disenfranchisement. This line of thought resonates with the ways U.S. imperialism and war in Mexico and Central America became an underlying social machine that kept requiring bodies for injury and targeted maiming. Colonialism, U.S. capitalist imperialism, forced migration, and exploitation of labor fuse what Puar cites as the work and war machine, "a biopolitical scripting of populations available for injury, whether through laboring or warring or both." The migrant worker continues to be figured, or in the words of Puar, "capacitated" to continue life, a debility that is generated by U.S. capitalist imperialism that simultaneously contributes "the unruly source material for rights discourses that propagate visibility, empowerment, identification, and pride" (2017, p. 65). Becoming the subject of redress and grievance as well as triumph, transgression, and success through the acquisition of worker's rights functions as a recapacitation of a debilitated body, exemplifying the practice of settler colonial value extraction justified in protectionist terms and soliciting worker's rights solutions that "while absolutely crucial to aiding some individuals, unfortunately lead to further perpetuation of debilitation," a mechanism whose aim is neither life nor death (2017, p. xviii-xix). My argument is that domestic workers are similarly construed as excessive, overdetermined, erroneous and capacity-laden, their bodies invested with a futurity that will place them in a zone of ongoing temporality for the purpose of living on in order to continue reproducing life. In my analysis below, I explore this concept of capacity further, by examining how domestic worker's bodies have been elaborated within organizing strategies and the ways injury and pain has functioned as a capacitating frame for seeking protections and rights. I propose looking at the capacitation of domestic workers' bodies by focusing on the historical, geographic, legislative, and

representational parameters of domestic workers' narratives within movements for dignity and rights. In doing so, I will show that through time domestic workers' potentiality is continuously compromised, their bodies capacitated, regulated and marked to be in service of others, facilitated by racial dynamic of value extraction of bodies of color both locally and transnationally.

On the Archive

One of those sites where the bodies of workers are made visible through narratives of pain is in the archives that hold accounts of past domestic worker organizing. Every archive is captive to a certain narrative (of the nation, of the state, of war, etc.), essentially marking the boundaries of a mediated history of resistance. In his book *Archives of the Insensible* (2015), Feldman follows the state's enigmatic dispersals of violence as they materialize in site-specific venues such as the archive. He argues that archival power makes invisible—and indeed insensible—the power of the state, at once expressing the violence of the state while masking itself in the representation of particular bodies, subject to being readable and unreadable by institutions all at once (2015). Feldman notes that since sovereign power is in perpetual "self-altering motion", it becomes imperative to assess the ways archives put forth certain cultural sensibilities that shift through time, stating that as institutions change the ways they archive, so do the ways we come to experience that which is archived as well (2015; p. 190). In her analysis of the colonial and racial politics of archival sources pertaining to domestic workers, Taylor Phillips similarly proposes the archive be "not an objective preservation site immune to larger social processes outside of libraries' doors" but rather a site where "the politics of race, class, and gender that left many Black and Irish women with few

economic opportunities outside of domestic service during the colonial era and afterward also shaped the availability and organization of sources about their lives in the archive" (2013, p. 386). Together, they note that the representation of particular bodies served to abstract power and the intersectional politics that negated their complex embodied experiences. In tracing how domestic workers came to be figured in archival sources pertaining to worker organizing, it was revealed how the body was repeatedly outlined in their attempts to display injury as evidence of violence, in hopes of transforming the occupation to demand recognition, protection, and rights. This process is made evident in the use of surveys, newsletters, extraction of worker testimonies, and organizing strategies across documents found in archival sites across California, as organizations worked towards bringing visibility and professionalizing the occupation of paid domestic work.

Ample textual and visual resources found in archives in California have briefly documented domestic worker organizing and the strategies used to validate their claims to awareness, protections, and worker and immigrant rights. They point to moments in history where collectives/organizations defined plans to address the particular conditions of workers during that time. In examining these distinct periods, several things become apparent. The leadership in those organizations determined the direction of/or form of visibility that was to take shape.

Absent Presences

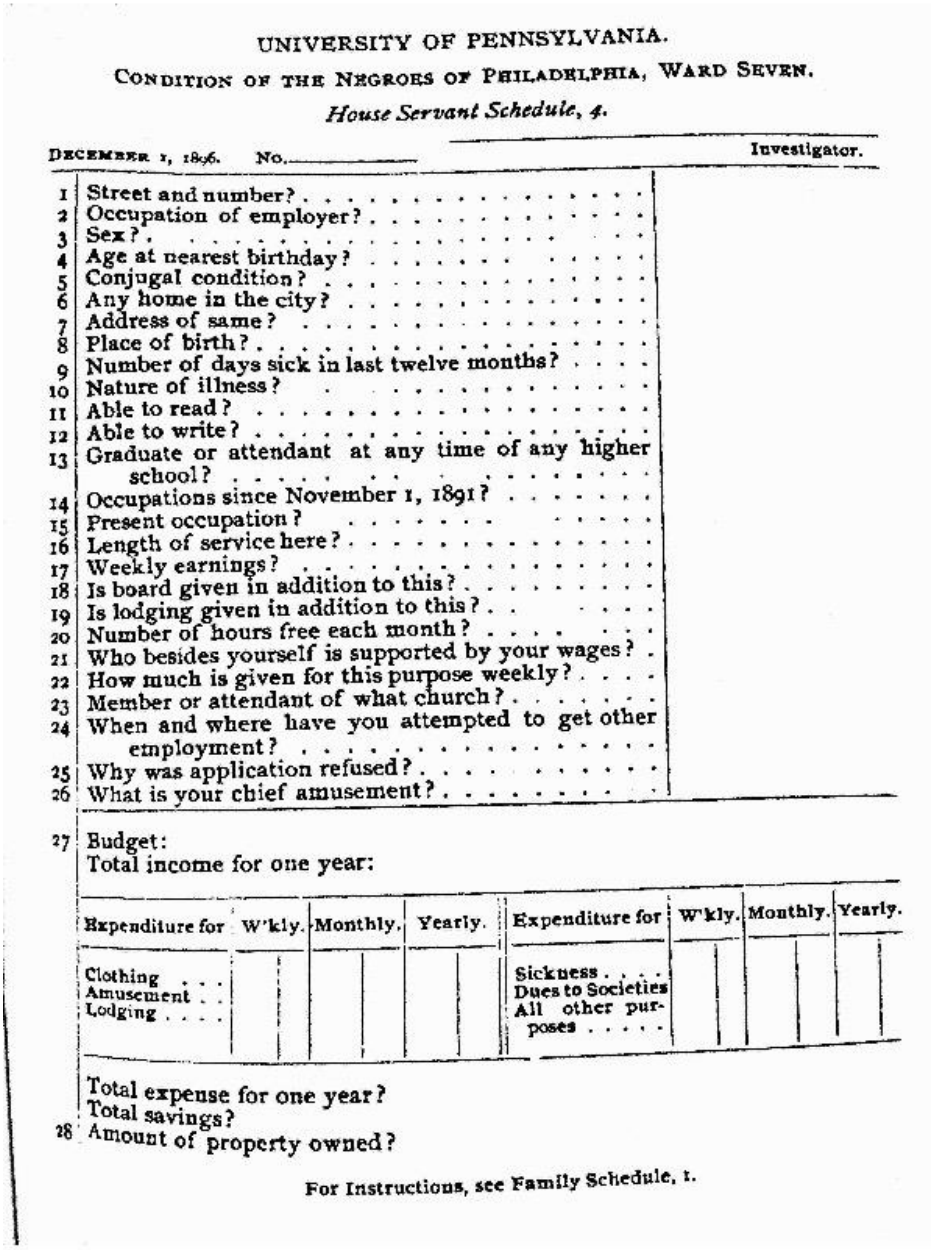
Surveys have been historically deployed by researchers and community-based organizations with the aim of gaining a comprehensive account of the demography and conditions of the domestic worker occupation. One of the first major occupational studies

completed on the domestic worker experience was done by sociologists and civil rights activist W.E.B. DuBois.[21] In his seminal study "The Philadelphia Negro," Du Bois's research "focused on racial power relations and demonstrated that oppression and discrimination trapped blacks in a vicious cycle of subordination"; he debunked myths of biological and social degeneracy (Morris 2015; p. 48). His study made crucial links to racial-ethnic, gender, and class relations, and mapped the spatial arrangement of racial segregation that revealed such dynamics. Influenced by the American Settlement Movement and the Hull House Maps and Papers, which examined working-class urban life, Dubois collaborated with Isabel Eaton on his focused study on domestic service, using the methods of surveys, interviews, and maps which launched the survey movement seeking to research the impact of labor on communities and workers. These works defied the goals and expectations of modern sociology, which was to produce objective, scientific knowledge that was meant to justify racism, rather that inform struggles against oppression.

Their collaborative effort in the late 1800s demonstrated an effort to understand the occupation through a focus on body and health. Their surveys listed questions that sought to understand the impact of the occupation on worker's bodies. In Figures 1-2, you are able to see questions that worked their way towards understanding the conditions and injuries of the house servant. Figure 1 shows the house servant schedule, which looks at the location of employment, occupation of employer, length of employment, education, weekly earning, leisure time, and family being supported by their wages. In Figure 2,

[21] This study was preceded by Lucy M. Salmon's 1897 study "Domestic Service," which included both employers and employees.

investigators asked more specific questions surrounding injuries and illnesses on the job, highlighting the flu (*la grippe*) and internal ailments as repeated illnesses among workers.



UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

CONDITION OF THE NEGROES OF PHILADELPHIA, WARD SEVEN.

House Servant Schedule, 4.

DECEMBER 1, 1896. No._____ Investigator.

1 Street and number?
2 Occupation of employer?
3 Sex?
4 Age at nearest birthday?
5 Conjugal condition?
6 Any home in the city?
7 Address of same?
8 Place of birth?
9 Number of days sick in last twelve months?
10 Nature of illness?
11 Able to read?
12 Able to write?
13 Graduate or attendant at any time of any higher school?
14 Occupations since November 1, 1891?
15 Present occupation?
16 Length of service here?
17 Weekly earnings?
18 Is board given in addition to this?
19 Is lodging given in addition to this?
20 Number of hours free each month?
21 Who besides yourself is supported by your wages?
22 How much is given for this purpose weekly?
23 Member or attendant of what church?
24 When and where have you attempted to get other employment?
25 Why was application refused?
26 What is your chief amusement?

27 Budget:
Total income for one year:

Expenditure for	W'kly.	Monthly.	Yearly.	Expenditure for	W'kly.	Monthly.	Yearly.
Clothing				Sickness			
Amusement				Dues to Societies			
Lodging				All other purposes			

Total expense for one year?
Total savings?
28 Amount of property owned?

For Instructions, see Family Schedule, 1.

Figure 1: House Servant Schedule, 1896.

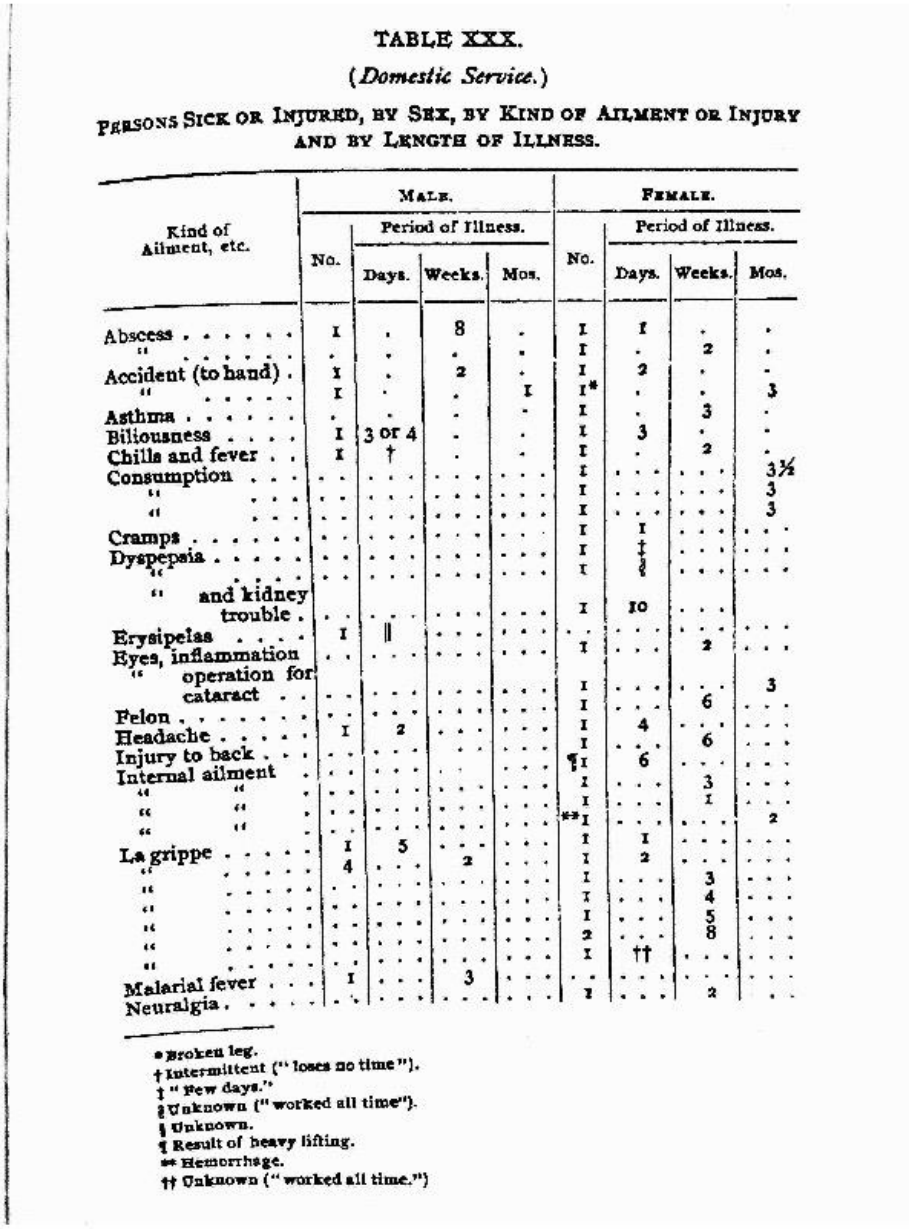


TABLE XXX.

(*Domestic Service.*)

PERSONS SICK OR INJURED, BY SEX, BY KIND OF AILMENT OR INJURY AND BY LENGTH OF ILLNESS.

Kind of Ailment, etc.	Male.				Female.			
	No.	Period of Illness.			No.	Period of Illness.		
		Days.	Weeks.	Mos.		Days.	Weeks.	Mos.
Abscess	1	.	8	.	1	1	.	.
"	.	.	.	.	1	.	2	.
Accident (to hand)	1	.	2	.	1	2	.	.
"	1	.	.	1	1*	.	.	3
Asthma	.	.	.	.	1	.	3	.
Biliousness	1	3 or 4	.	.	1	3	.	.
Chills and fever	1	†	.	.	1	.	2	.
Consumption	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	3½
"	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	3
"	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	3
Cramps	.	.	.	.	1	1	.	.
Dyspepsia	.	.	.	.	1	‡	.	.
"	.	.	.	.	1	‡	.	.
" and kidney trouble	.	.	.	.	1	10	.	.
Erysipelas	1	‖	.	.	.	.	.	.
Eyes, inflammation	.	.	.	.	1	.	2	.
" operation for cataract	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	3
Felon	.	.	.	.	1	.	6	.
Headache	1	2	.	.	1	4	.	.
Injury to back	.	.	.	.	1	.	6	.
Internal ailment	.	.	.	.	¶1	6	.	.
" "	.	.	.	.	1	.	3	.
" "	.	.	.	.	1	.	1	.
" "	.	.	.	.	**1	.	.	2
La grippe	1	5	.	.	1	1	.	.
"	4	.	2	.	1	2	.	.
"	.	.	.	.	1	.	3	.
"	.	.	.	.	1	.	4	.
"	.	.	.	.	1	.	5	.
"	.	.	.	.	2	.	8	.
"	.	.	.	.	1	††	.	.
Malarial fever	1	.	3	.	.	.	.	.
Neuralgia	.	.	.	.	1	.	2	.

* Broken leg.
† Intermittent ("loses no time").
‡ "Few days."
§ Unknown ("worked all time").
‖ Unknown.
¶ Result of heavy lifting.
** Hemorrhage.
†† Unknown ("worked all time.")

Figure 2: Table Documenting Illnesses of Domestic Service, 1896.

In addition to the enumeration of domestic service and where they resided within the seventh ward, the study noted several frictions that held up attempts for reform of domestic service. In addition to this labor still being done by women of color despite the

large number of men taking up the occupation during this time, it was stated that younger workers predominated the occupation due to the immediate needs of their families, most of them had migrated from the south, and black workers were still being forced out of mostly all other occupations (DuBois; pp. 427-438). Coupled with the stigma of domestic service being associated with slavery, efforts at reform during this period were at minimum "hopeful"—this was due to an expectation that domestic work would eventually align itself with modern methods of industrial progress. This notion was also informed by the expectation that college-educated white women would lift housework into "the progress of the age" (430) through the application of domestic science and economics. As their study states:

> We may take courage that reforms in domestic service and in household economics will spread, since they have now ceased to be regarded as impossibilities, and the problems involved are being fairly faced. With the widening of woman's mental horizon has come a realizing sense of the truth regarding household work, that "in no other occupation is there so much waste of labor and capital, and in no other would a fraction of this waste be overlooked." (Eaton 1896, in DuBois, Anderson, and Eaton 1996; p. 431).

This statement not only reveals that hope for progress in the occupation will come through its treatment of science, but also gleans housework in admitting to its overlooked capitalist value.[22] As history would then show, these attempts towards reform via modernizing methods were hopeful at best in that they did not directly tackle its enduring legacy of slavery at its root, and its proliferation in maintaining racial and gendered social hierarchies as they were accounted for in the surveys and mapping of the particular urban

[22] Isabel Eaton's proposal of specializing household work in a systemic way meant economizing home life by giving domestic workers incentives to save on waste and products by equally distributing savings made, which to her will "overall improve quality of life" (1896, in DuBois, Anderson, and Eaton 1996; p. 502).

setting of this study. Despite Eaton's observation that the detachment from slavery will not occur until reform takes place, the lingering question becomes: If such systemic reform does occur, whom will it benefit? As studies throughout the next century will show, predominantly white employers still demand domestic work, which continues to be disproportionately performed by immigrant, women of color. Employers continue to justify a desire for "colored" domestic workers, revealed in their accounts through arguments that they give more attention to detail, that they can be counted for on any day and time, and that they have an intuitive knowledge of what you want and they do everything without waiting to be told. This language, as Toni Morrison notes, constructs a white imaginary that almost always becomes a "predictable employment of racially informed and determined chains" (1992; p. xi) for the purpose of fabricating a black presence that served "ideological and imperialistic rationales for subjugation…strongly urged, thoroughly serviceable, companionably ego-reinforcing, and pervasive" (1992; p. 8). This white imagined black presence is also indicative of power dynamics limiting insights into the embodied experiences of domestic workers from slavery to its neocolonial forms today.[23] It also contributed to a complete foreclosure of any account of

[23] In addition to these limitations and failures, the study also offered fragments that described the conditions and characteristics of domestic work that are reminiscent of what domestic workers describe today. Their study also highlights workers' large support of their families (see pp. 459-461) which connects to today's experience with migrant domestic workers. In regard to restlessness, leisure and time, they note that there is very little to nothing of that, because the worker has to always be in service to the employer, even when they're not there, and during days off. They also describe a dullness and monotony that comes with performing domestic work, and although not explicitly stated, insinuated it as a form of disciplining the body. This connects to what later surveys capture are concerns over time in order to be with children and/or live their life outside of work. This also connects to my interviews, which suggest a preference for domestic work due to their ability to take their children to work.

pain beyond epidemiological studies. It is telling as it creates a meaning of pain devoid of human experience and stripped of any evidence of state violence. This construction of black bodies as unable to feel pain has served as justification not just for slavery, but later to justify their treatment as commodities. Epidemiological approaches were characteristic of sociological studies promoting biological explanations of the body during this time period, as Schilling (2003) would note, more for the purpose of legitimizing the subordination and oppression of black bodies with black women further confined to servitude. This biological scripting generated an "absent presence" that failed to offer explicit theories on the body that challenged rationalism and colonial body/mind dualisms. This is seen in DuBois's study as he worked towards reform through meritocracy—although he did not seek to radically transform the system, there was a real sense, in reading through analysis of these surveys that he supervised that he was focused on outlining how racism informed conditions that compromised black well-being and kept them from participating in the economy.[24] Elijah Anderson would later reflect on DuBois's study one hundred years later in 1996, when he highlights the pre-determined agendas of the sponsors of his study: managing white anxieties over "contamination of the races" and seeking "human betterment" as a result of eugenic projects burgeoning in the late 1800s-early 1900s (Anderson 1996, in DuBois, Anderson, and Eaton 1996; p. xiv).

[24] For more on Du Bois's later sociological studies on black health and his critiques on the racialization processes linked to health and medicine, see Alondra Nelson's *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (2011).

Similar factors of domestic work being associated with servitude and the lack of control over their labor arrangement hampered efforts to legitimize housework as "real work." By the 1940s, African American women were still being called upon to do housework, holding more than half of domestic worker jobs nationally (Shah and Seville, 2011). Powerful social movements emerged during this period, as Nadasen documents, where leaders highlighted the continuous trope of slavery and racism while carving out a collective political identity as workers in order to demand rights through labor standards and government regulation (2016). Reform was still being framed around modernizing claims that attempted to standardize the occupation in order to ensure a steady supply of workers while still enforcing black servility. Reconceptualizing the occupation by promoting self-regulation through voluntary, labor contracts would allow workers to take control over their work schedule, pay, overtime, rest days, and negotiate paid vacation. Although these efforts put domestic workers' labor rights on the national political agenda, "it laid the groundwork for justifying labor protection in the home as it changed the public's perception of the home as a place that could not be regulated and standardized" (Shah and Seville 2011; p. 423) where employers were hesitant to relinquish their superiority and power over domestic workers. In the 1960s, during a time of a domestic labor shortage, organizers focused their demands around professionalization again in order to bring back workers after many had left due to worsening conditions and physical exhaustion. This reemergence of professionalism through training did not center workers' vision on how to transform the occupation. Terms were defined by middle-class women who argued that African American women

would return to domestic work if standards were improved and business-like relationships established.[25]

Despite facing staunch opposition, domestic worker organizing campaigns worked tirelessly for respect and recognition of their work, drawing attention to the domestic sphere as a work site, the gendered division of reproductive labor, utilized public spaces, and took control of their own narratives as workers even as they operated within the shadows of traditional labor movements, the struggle for black freedom, and mainstream women's movements. It is clear that at the core of progressive reformers' attempts to determine the conditions of paid household labor was a struggle for control of the domestic worker herself as property, with its primary objective of advocating their inclusion in labor protections and rights not to place them in equal footing with employers but rather to insure the presence of a domestic class to attend to and advance the needs of America's middle-class. This control over the domestic worker demanded not only a continuation of their service but also a complete claim over their time. It trapped them in a legal limbo that marked them as "not quite a servant of old but not yet an employee" where resistance of such demands were in a very real sense, a fight to be free (Smith 1999; p. 95). Although standardized contracts and inclusion into labor protections sought to eradicate such arduous demands on workers, a simultaneous agenda went into effect that promoted the idea of domestic work as being stress-free, easy, and in no way detrimental to the health of working women. Paid domestic work continued its

[25] For more on these organizing projects led by the National Committee on Household Employment (NCHE) in the 1960s, see Nadasen (2016).

presence as an occupation undertaken by working-class women of color to benefit the interests of employers while their needs and those of their families remained absent.

As the occupation in California transformed to become largely performed by immigrant labor from Mexico and Central America with distinct colonial histories, racial-gendered hierarchies, and cultures of servitude of their own, similar maneuvers of subjugation and invisibility emerged in domestic workers accounts of their experience as they were mapped and archived in surveys and testimonies. Enforcing this invisibility required their presence in order to exploit their labor production value and reinforce white liberal American values of individualism, progress, and freedom. This has been an ongoing system of coloniality that has historically sought to maintain a racialized space of social and political containment and structures of disposability among Latino immigrants (Rocco 2016). This is seen in Deverell's historical analysis of Los Angeles and the remaking of its Mexican past at the turn of the 19th century (same time frame as DuBois's study), where containment was facilitated through explicit attempts to control their bodies. This was also done through demography and epidemiological determinism and overt campaigns that sought to create cultural and physical boundaries in order to fix Mexicans into a representative space "around a particular set of characteristics or traits tied ubiquitously to a social and ethnic category known as "the Mexican," or the even more reflexive "Our Mexican"" in hopes of making them a less visible minority while aiming for their complete disappearance (2004; p. 33). Fears around the expanding Black and Mexican population elicited demands for demographic studies that not only informed California's expansion of eugenics movements and the prison industrial complex, but also immigration policies that emphasized borders and crafted illegality—a racial script

that marked Mexicans as "always the laborer, never the citizen" (Reisler 1976 in Deverell 2004; p. 12).[26] This would complicate efforts as domestic worker organizations began to assess the immigrant and transnational experiences of the growing Latina domestic worker community in California from the mid to late 20th century.

Prefigurations

After the Progressive Era, plans to transform the occupation continued to evoke the body in surveys meant to measure the conditions of workers to help inform organizing strategies to support demands for workplace protections. In the 1980s and 90s, domestic worker organizations in California reanimated similar strategies of organizing, both within and outside traditional union spaces in order to advocate for immigrant and women's rights. These efforts were again documented in archives that again, revealed a need to measure the health of the worker's body, in hopes of garnering support for worker contracts and enforcing rights. Examination of two archival sites, one in San Francisco and the other in Los Angeles, unveiled organizational strategies that sought to represent a group as rights-bearing subjects while re-scripting what a body can, could, or should do. While these histories continued to build upon and map these two cities as important sites for immigrant labor organizing, they were met with tensions that illuminated the possibilities and limitations of worker imaginaries and economies.

[26] Also see Martha Menchaca's *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (2001); Mae M. Ngai's *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (2004); and Roberto D. Hernández's *Coloniality of the US/Mexico Border: Power, Violence, and the Decolonial Imperative* (2018).

In the 1980s, San Francisco had a growing domestic worker organizing network that came out of the Union WAGE (Women's Alliance to Gain Equality) project formed in the 1970s. Later in the 1980s, it became the Household Workers' Rights (HWR), a Bay Area non-profit women's association. This group was formed by employee members of the Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Board #15, which during its duration as Union WAGE and later HWR, covered household workers with benefits such as lunch breaks and overtime pay. According to the archive's historical background, their organizing strategies first emphasized these legal rights, by getting employment agencies to inform employers and workers of laws, provide legal assistance to workers when necessary, and provide contracts which could be presented at time of hire, which included legal requirements of sick leave, vacation pay and holiday pay (Household Workers' Rights Records, 1982-1996). When Union WAGE disbanded and became HWR in 1982, a shift from legal rights to organizing an employment referral service occurred. This included transforming the organization into a membership-based organization that provided a housecleaning service with an environmental, non-toxic approach, one that was continuously promoted in their bi-monthly newsletter publication. Although the ideological differences that led to this shift are vague and incomplete, hints are seen in the different priorities and strategies they practiced, such as the 1982 questionnaire HWR put out to survey the health concerns of household workers.

The survey was modeled after one conducted by the Women's Occupational Health Resource Center in New York. The survey "delves into the specific problems faced by household workers" collecting information similar to the demographic study performed by DuBois and his research team—women's ages, ages of their children,

childcare concerns, and length of time of household work (Household Workers' Rights Records, 1982-1996). Ideological differences were seen in the surveys where workers refused to speak under the terms of the health survey and voiced their concerns about the lack of diversity and political leadership among minoritized groups. There were 170 responses to this survey, 40 of which are in Spanish. Figure 3 is a sample copy of the survey with two figures and instructions on identifying workplace injuries, asking workers to point arrows to the site of injury and pain. Figure 4 depicts a response from a worker, who overpasses the figure in the survey and moves on to explain a much more systemic issue.

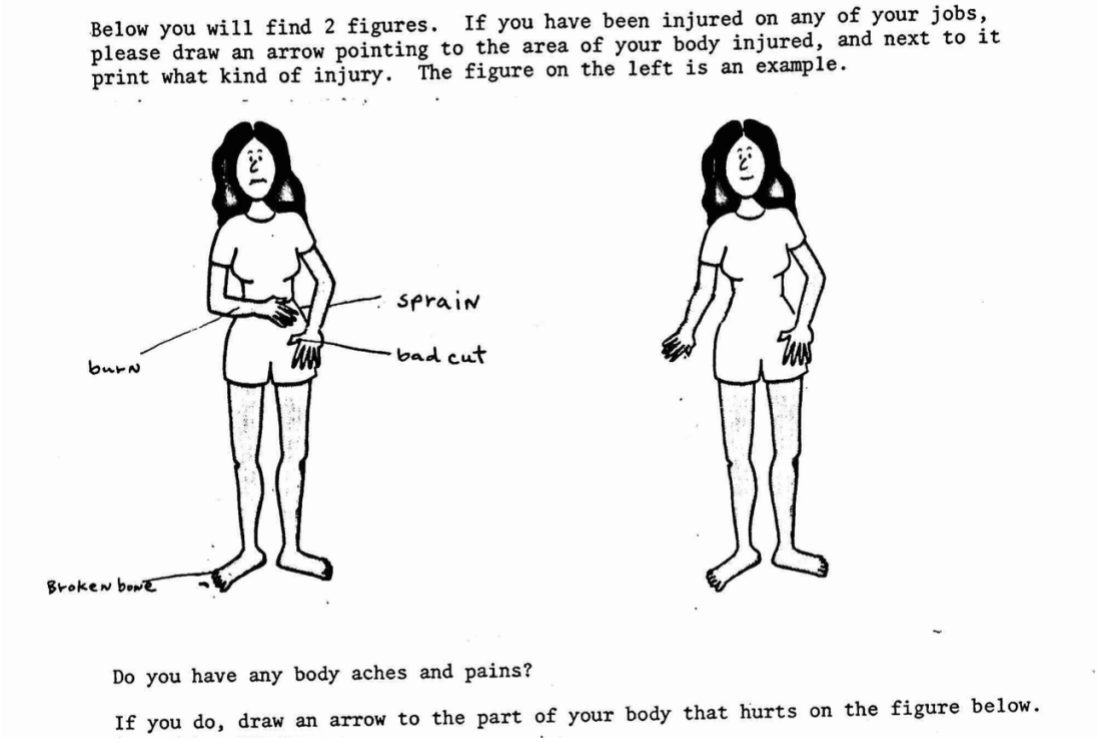
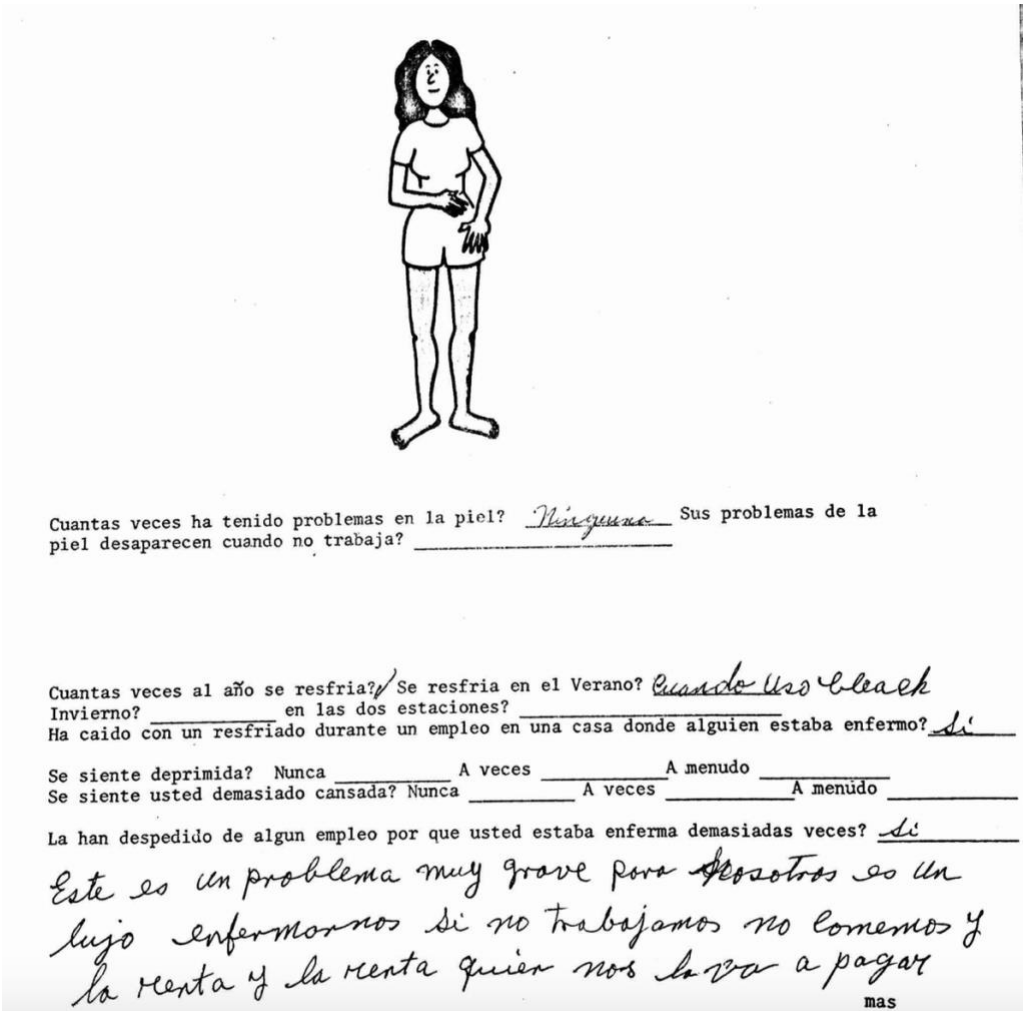


Figure 3:Survey Instructions

Source: Household Workers' Rights Records, 1982-1996



Cuantas veces ha tenido problemas en la piel? Ninguna Sus problemas de la piel desaparecen cuando no trabaja? _____

Cuantas veces al año se resfria? / Se resfria en el Verano? Cuando Uso Cleack
Invierno? _____ en las dos estaciones? _____
Ha caido con un resfriado durante un empleo en una casa donde alguien estaba enfermo? Si

Se siente deprimida? Nunca _____ A veces _____ A menudo _____
Se siente usted demasiado cansada? Nunca _____ A veces _____ A menudo _____

La han despedido de algun empleo por que usted estaba enferma demasiadas veces? Si

Este es un problema muy grave para Nosotros es un lujo enfermarnos si no trabajamos no comemos y la renta y la renta quien nos la va a pagar

mas

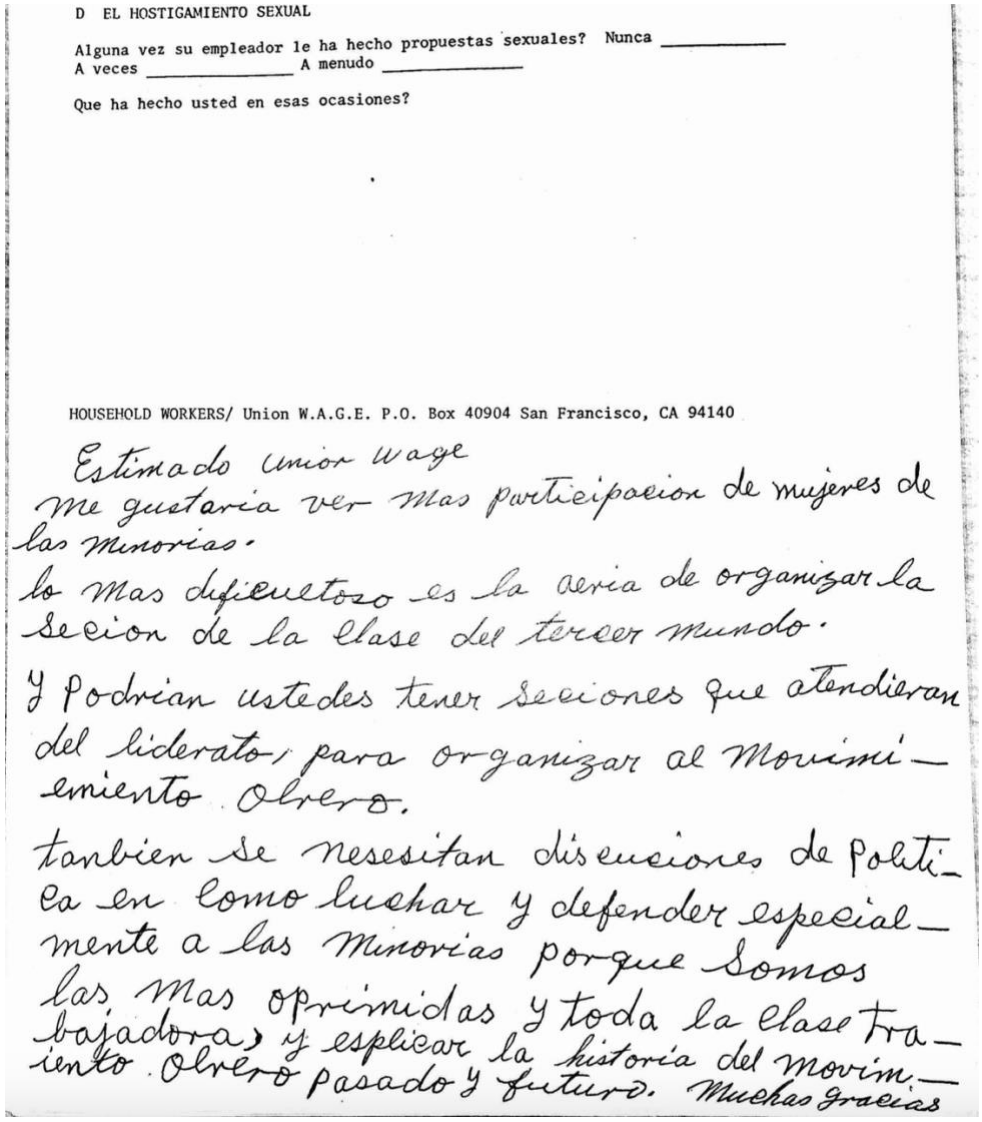
Figure 4: Survey Response Side A

Source: Household Workers' Rights Records, 1982-1996

The worker responds to the question of whether they have been laid off from work due to being sick multiple times, which she responds: "Si. Este es un problema muy grave para nosotras es un lujo enfermarnos si no trabajamos no comemos y la renta y la renta quien

nos la va pagar" (Household Workers' Rights Records, 1982-1996).[27] While the worker seems to point to an obvious workplace issue of no paid sick days, it is interesting to note how she speaks on behalf of a collective body that is being politically evoked but dispossessed within an official language and narrative space. Drifting away from the descriptive features of the survey, the worker retroactively articulates a dense intersection of social relations that cannot be summarized through such a representational space. She highlights the body as a site of power where an embodied crisis takes place, one that encompasses economic inequalities in the form of food and housing insecurity. This process of telling, captured in the margins of the survey, implies a disidentification whereby the worker both affirms their presence caught within the parameters of the survey while simultaneously shifting the political terrain to engender a countermemory where new contestatory identities and political practices can emerge. At the end of the survey, the worker finds a crevice where she creates "alternatives registers of meaning and authority" a form of retrofitted memory that actualizes "embodied material realities, political visions, and creative desires for societal transformation" (Blackwell 2011; pg. 2). Seen below in Figure 5, the worker leaves trace of this political vision by stating:

[27] English translation: "Yes. This is a very grave problem for us it is a luxury getting sick if we don't work we don't eat and the rent and the rent who will pay it for us."



D EL HOSTIGAMIENTO SEXUAL

Alguna vez su empleador le ha hecho propuestas sexuales? Nunca _____
A veces _____ A menudo _____

Que ha hecho usted en esas ocasiones?

HOUSEHOLD WORKERS/ Union W.A.G.E. P.O. Box 40904 San Francisco, CA 94140

Estimado Union Wage
Me gustaria ver Mas participacion de mujeres de las Minorias.
lo Mas dificultoso es la aeria de organizar la Secion de la clase del tercer mundo.
Y Podrian ustedes tener Secciones que atendieran del liderato, para organizar al Movimiento Obrero.
tanbien se nesesitan discuciones de Politica en como luchar y defender especialmente a las Minorias porque Somos las Mas oprimidas y toda la clase Trabajadora, y esplicar la historia del Movimiento Obrero pasado y futuro. Muchas Gracias

Figure 5: Survey Response Side B

Source: Household Workers' Rights Records, 1982-1996.

Estimado Union Wage Me gustaria ver mas participacion de mujeres de las minorias. Lo mas dificultoso es la area de organizar la secion de la clase del tercer mundo. Y podrian ustedes tener seciones que atendieran del liderato, para organizar al movimiento obrero. Tambien se necesitan discusiones de politica en como luchar y defender especialmente a las minorias porque somos las mas oprimidas y toda la clase trabajadora, y explicar la historia de movimiento obrero pasado y futuro. Muchas gracias.

(English translation)
Dear Union Wage, I would like to see more participation of minority women. The most difficult thing is organizing the sector of the third world class. And can you have sessions that attend to leadership, to organize the worker movement. We also need discussions of politics on how to fight and defend especially for minorities because we are the most oppressed and all the working class, and explain the history of the movement both past and future. Many thanks.

The continuation of measuring the pain and bodily injuries of workers as seen in this survey is an attempt to identify patterns of injury to better understand both the hazards and impact of excessive workload characteristic of domestic work. In doing so, they would be in a better position to demand protections that employers would have to comply with, mostly through the use of standardized contracts. This inherited strategy insists on a hypervisibility that requires them to appeal to an image of a prefigured body in pain, accessible to a collective interested in advancing worker's rights. The response by the worker in the survey challenges this maneuver by refashioning the limits of what is seemingly comprehensible. Their statement both unveils the hierarchical exclusions that result from focusing on single-identity issues, while disrupting the perceived locations of pain. Hypervisibility, according to Gordon, is "a kind of obscenity of accuracy that abolishes the distinctions between "permission and prohibition, presence and absence"...we are led to believe not only that everything can be seen, but also that everything is available and accessible for our consumption" (2008, pg. 16). Such figuration not only makes it difficult to imagine the domestic worker's experience other than a visible invisibility, it also reproduces narratives of workers that contribute their injuries and pain as part of the job, rather than a deliberate product of state violence. The biopolitical distribution of debility, as Puar calls it, is a result of (U.S.) imperial projects

and capitalist global expansion that ensnares a disposable population as "laborers-consigned-to-having-an-accident" (2017, p. 64) or as Alaimo asserts, recognizing them as vulnerable—meaning, capable of being physically wounded (2010, p. 24) .

The body, and therefore the embodiment of social relations, becomes a crucial site where resistance is not just located but makes the body visible in a way that takes hold of the body, a power relation which Foucault describes as a site that is invested on, trained, and marked, forced to carry out and perform certain tasks, subjecting it as useful only of it is productive and constitutive as a labor power (1979). This permeability of the body to be exposed as "vulnerable" while abstracting the "differential distribution of vulnerability" can easily lead towards further violence (Sabsay, 2016, p. 297). Gilmore identifies this practice of differential distribution as racism, where "fatal couplings of power and difference" displace bodies into spaces where ideological and material agency is constrained, hierarchies of who is considered "human" set in place, and radical alternatives to freedom disengaged (2002). This includes the belief that value comes from wage-controlled spaces and organizing around recognition and rights, given that they materially depend on the legitimacy of militarism or warfare (Gilmore, 1998, ctd in Gilmore, 2002). This all points to the contradictions of humanitarian practices and rights-based frameworks as central pathways to social justice and transformation in order to reflect on how the body of the worker, as it articulates narratives of injury and pain, can operate in ways that both support and negate transformative possibilities. The liberalization of injury depoliticizes these transnational, global regimes of violence; its aim of visibility for inclusion and rights obscures the facets of structural inequalities and racism as a process of debilitation.

The historical continuity and complexity of the surveys outlines the prefigured assessments of workers' bodies in pain, attempting to locate pain at the same time that pain refused to speak. While pain was not denied, it was also not confirmed. The worker's response shifted the gaze from the worker's body as individual tragedy, to demonstrating the architecture of neoliberal globalization that benefits from the transnational embodied crises (bodily sickness, racialized surveillance, and gendered, sexualized violence) that they produce, with everlasting consequences to their body (Liu, 2015). This forged a political consciousness that encouraged examining transnational actors as playing an active role in facilitating migration to profit from citizen's labor. Worker's migrant experiences transformed the landscape of organizing, during the 1980s when San Francisco was itself transforming into a regional center in the global economy with marked occupational and income polarization. This created a large demand for service workers which coincided with the post-1965 influx of immigrants from Asia and Latin America as a result of the Hart-Cellar Act and refugees fleeing the wars in Central America (Sassen, 2001; De Graauw, 2016, p. 59). Although Union WAGE dissolved shortly after the survey was conducted, the demands highlighted in this response forecasted a larger shift that linked global cities such as San Francisco and Los Angeles to this transnational circuit of labor, but also ushered in activists' networks that transcended borders.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, these restructurings and networks formed the model of organizing shaped by labor and immigration law, which immigrant and women of color revamped to directly address the conditions experienced by houseworkers in

general. Organizing bases, as seen in the L.A. model of immigrant worker organizing, concentrated on recognizing and further developing leadership, working in coalition with other organizations, which includes becoming informed and being in solidarity with global struggles relevant to local context. Through these combined forces, alliances that fomented critique and creative figurations were made possible. They put forth alternative figurations or schemes of representation that accounted for embodied structures of transnational feminist knowledge production and resistance across space (social, geopolitical) and time (historical). The case of IDEPSCA and the collective MEA illuminates this approach where transfiguration can temporarily take place—and the contributions and tensions that came with them.

Mujeres en Acción

There is a force that compels me to return to this space, the house that serves as the organizing site of IDEPSCA and their household worker's collective, Mujeres en Acción (MEA). It seems like I am not alone either. Pico-Union has in the last twenty years undergone a massive transformation as a result of continued urban development and sprawl in adjacent Downtown Los Angeles, displacing working-class, immigrant families and the growing homeless community. This has led to a housing crisis that continues to push people to take on multiple jobs and use whatever means available to them to make ends meet. As a result, people seem to gravitate to the house, but according to some organizers, it has been more to inquire about spaces for rent rather than to express interest in the organization. In fact, they did not even know that an organization exists there, a space that ironically functioned as a home for Central American refugees in the 1980s

and 1990s. One of the organizers asked out loud, “What’s the connection that’s missing?” These reemerging, overlapping forces have presented household worker organizers in this space challenges and new opportunities for creative change, in ways that retroactively build solidarity, movement, and capacity for transformation. One way to better understand this changing landscape is to examine the simultaneous actions of MEA aimed at the DWBR movement and the possibilities they continue to build within their own space.

The organizing of MEA reflects the heterogeneity of the domestic worker organizing field. MEA became a key organization in the California DWBR movement. In coalition with several other organizations, they joined bus trips to Sacramento where they rallied with domestic worker organizations from all over the state and rallied and lobbied senators to support, pass, and make permanent the DWBR. Compared to other DW collectives and organizations, MEA is relatively smaller, with three paid staff members and an average of 6-8 workers getting together each Wednesdays for meetings and workshops. One of the most visible locations of their organizing has been their participation in the public rallies and lobbying in support of the CA DWBR, before and after its passage in 2013. The seven-hour ride from Los Angeles to Sacramento brought diverse groups together on the same bus where workers, organizers, and allies were able to connect and plan together their agenda for the day, while children wrote letters and joined the chorus of protest songs that kept everyone energized and awake.

Much of the organizing that happened on the bus was preparing their speeches and testimonies that would be shared either in the front steps of the State Capitol, in flash mob or theatre performance skits, or in lobby visits to senators who had not expressed

support. Their agenda to try to persuade senators relied on carefully crafted testimonies based on key talking points. Organizers passed around handouts that outlined these talking points that would aid workers in framing their narratives. In a no more than ten-minute speech, workers were encouraged to address the following: (1) Define who are domestic workers; (2) talk about the opposition; and (3) close with a powerful testimony to inspire legislators to take action. Below are the details of the talking points:

1. *Who are we?* Domestic workers are people who provide child and adult care to children, elderly, and people with disabilities; they are workers who for more than 70 years have been excluded from basic labor protections like rest breaks and overtime pay. For generations they have been working in the shadows, who have been abused. These are the most vulnerable workers.
2. *Build trust with the opposition. Explain the field and get them to appreciate us.* The opposition is coming from a fear of change. That's all it is. It hasn't been done, they're unsure of what it means. The coalition has met with Disability Rights Organizations who are in opposition of the bill and we are very hopeful that we'll come to some sort of resolution with the disability rights community. Third party agencies are well funded and did a really good job of confusing our message through media placement—they want to keep the industry the way it is and are counting on us to run out of resources.
3. *Close on human side—legislator must walk out of the room feeling –what are we going to do about this?* Give a powerful testimony of no more than 3 minutes (Not including translation).

These three points composed the primary frame to persuade and seek support for AB 889.[28] It begins by first crafting a narrative of vulnerability. The argument is to emphasize the historic exclusion of domestic workers from labor protections, while reiterating their value alongside those they care for. In other words, this most vulnerable workforce are people who care for your home, your family, or yourself. The opposition

[28] AB 889 was the first iteration of the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights, vetoed by then Governor Jerry Brown in 2012. It preceded AB 241, the Domestic Worker Bill of Rights which was signed in 2013.

claimed that in passing a DWBR, families will be unable to pay for the workers who care for their family members, with care worker agencies rallying up disability rights organizations with false messaging around an ensuing crisis that will make care work unaffordable. Talking points distributed at the lobbying events further elaborated, "When a caregiver is treated fairly and with dignity, they will work harder and stay on the job…it's not your fault that domestic workers have been left out of some basic labor protections, but it's up to you to correct this mistake" (CDWC Lobbying Material).

The extension of rights to domestic workers on the basis of their "vulnerability" immobilized their political potential to enact change while also reinforcing the state to further regulate them through formal labor institutions. According to Ally, this requires a careful examination of how domestic workers are politically incorporated—on what basis, and under what terms. In the context of domestic workers achieving rights in post-apartheid South Africa, she writes that constructed vulnerability required the state to act on their behalf while unleashing "a mode of power that ignored workers' existing capacities and practices of power, reinforced domestic workers' dependent statuses, and reflected an insensitivity to the specificities of paid domestic work as an intimate form of labor" (Ally, 2009, p. 19). In standardizing their bodies as useful hence bearing the right to claim protections, organizers clearly represented the making and unmaking of workers' bodies through a neoliberal guise. Within a global economy of injury, their narratives of injury functioned as capacitating frames that sought workers' empowerment at the same time that it maintained their precarity through making them available for the needs of others, what Puar calls sovereign power's "right to maim" (Puar, 2017). In conversation with Ally, Jennifer N. Fish examined the global movement that established worker

protection standards for domestic workers via the United Nations' International Labour Organization. Similarly analyzing worker's testimonies of exclusion, Fish takes a more optimistic approach by arguing that the collective narrative of vulnerability organized by the International Domestic Worker Federation (IDWF) (and appealing to human rights institutions) in fact "brought the presence of "actual workers" into the negotiations in ways that amplified a wider empathy for the life experiences of the domestic workers" despite taking on traditional notions of gender and race to make emotional appeals (2017, p. 149). This rhetorical tool of persuasion, according to Fish, had more payoffs than it did risks—although it placed workers in a contradictory position to seek recognition as workers and humans deserving of rights based on their vulnerability especially as migrant "third world" women, they simultaneously challenged this through their very presence as movement leaders speaking on the international stage.

The workers, in crafting their vulnerability and in an effort to avoid being erased, centered the bodies in their testimonies as they made their claims for rights, making their claims more than a call for protections but rather connecting their labor to the reproduction of everyday life. The NDWA slogan "work that makes other work possible" continues to be the unifying theme behind the strategy to make their movement more than just about achieving rights. They also make a bold move towards a radical cultural shift to value domestic work. They challenged the individualization of liberal capitalism that defers care work to women, and women of color in particular. Everyone is interconnected to them—they are a vulnerable workforce that directly transforms their own lives. At a rally that domestic workers organized in Los Angeles to celebrate International Women's Day and demand support for AB 241, MEA organizers alongside

other immigrant worker rights organizations gathered to share their testimonies that reflected the movement's unified claim for rights by returning to their bodies as a way to give greater visibility to their labor: MEA organizer and another domestic worker organizer shared:

> *Necesitamos que Jerry Brown firme el acta AB 241. Ya es tiempo que vean nuestros rostros. Ya es tiempo de decir no a la injusticia. Ya es tiempo de ver cara a cara a Jerry Brown que el también nos necesita a todas las trabajadoras—el necesita limpieza, el necesita quien le cocine.* (MEA organizer)[29]

> *Si se va a poder—porque nosotras las trabajadoras, las que cuidamos niños, las que le limpiamos la casa a todos los empleadores, que ellos están recibiendo todos sus beneficios…todos! Y nosotros no recibimos. Ellos si están en sus puestos, y nosotros estamos en sus casas—limpiándoles el piso, lavándoles el caro, bañándole a los perros, cuidándole a los niños…comen de estas manos de nosotras que les cocinamos.* (domestic worker organizer)[30]

Collectively speaking on behalf of all domestic workers, the MEA organizer demanded then Governor Jerry Brown to see them face to face—it is time to say no to injustice, she stated, because even he needs our labor, someone to clean and cook for him. The other domestic worker organizer similarly evokes the body in her claims as well, by speaking about her hands. While employers are comfortable in their social position receiving benefits, we are in their homes cleaning their floors, washing their cars, bathing their pets, caring for their children… "*comen de estas manos de nosotras que les cocinamos* /

[29] English Translation: "We need for Jerry Brown to sign AB 241. It is time that they see our faces. It is time to say no to injustice. It is time to see Jerry Brown face to face because he too needs all of us (domestic) workers—he needs housecleaning, he needs someone to cook for him."
[30] English Translation: Yes we can—because we the workers, the ones who care for children, the ones who clean the house of all employers, those who receive all their benefits…all of them! And we don't receive any. They are in their occupations, and we are in their homes—cleaning their floors, washing their cars, bathing their pets, caring for their children…they eat from our hands, from us (workers) that cook for them."

you eat from my hands, our hands who cook for you." Both their testimonies, in a sense, blurred the lines that fix them as static, vulnerable workers, and shifted them to overlap with the everyday lives of politicians who represent the embodiment of the state. Continuing the slogan of "work that makes other work possible" as a justification to be deserving of rights, community allies joined with the following statements:

> *We're fighting because domestic workers know that it is time that they be brought into full protection in labor rights. They deserve protection because they protect our homes. They protect our children, they protect our elderly. They even protect our pets. They protect all that is the most sacred in our lives.* (CHIRLA organizer)

> *Women who are in other peoples' homes making it possible for their children to get to school, making it possible for their families to get to work, making it possible for the well-being of our every family…every community is counting on domestic workers. So governor we ask you today to support this movement. We ask you to support the passage of AB 241.* (Community ally)

Here, they elaborated on what they make possible—"they protect all that is the most sacred in our lives" by making possible "the well-being of our every family…every community is counting on domestic workers" (CHIRLA organizer). In many ways, the frame "women making it possible for" references this colonial, now state-sanctioned reproductive labor that stems from slavery, dispossession and set the boundaries between public and private, using gender and race to promote and justify the exploitation of such labor. Their statements are also inclusive of "every" family, leaving space to think about the families of workers whose well-being is also dependent on their labor across borders as transnational workers, mothers, and family members. Their absence is required at many levels—from their displacement from countries of origin, to becoming migrants, to working in the home. However, workers are carving out new modes of existence that do not necessarily reduce them to the dictates of the state. It can be argued that their

potentiality is domesticated through their claims for state protections, but emphasizing the need of the state officials to use their labor as well. Yet in doing so, ironically, their own body is stripped of other possibilities for them, and not merely useable bodies as labor. But in the act of articulating presence and absence as a bind that connects them and the state, employers, and their families, domestic workers are questioning the limits of representation, making their claims an act of recognizing the interdependency and vulnerability they share. This brings in the work of Judith Butler, who theorizes political mobilizations of vulnerability in practices of resistance. Careful not to reduce vulnerability to injurability, Butler defines vulnerability as relationality due to our radical dependence on others, and on the material and social world we come into being (which might sustain or fail to sustain us); and vulnerability also implies the capacity to affect and be affected, enmeshed in a capacity to act and be transformed by each other (Butler 2005 in Sabsay 2016). Worker's testimonies articulate a continuous historical failure to protect them, to sustain possibilities for them. If the state is the largest consumer of their narratives, in what ways will law respond to this relationality, will legislation help transform the structures that make some bodies more permeable than others?

Domestic workers clearly understood the scripted narratives they were to inhabit and perform, allowing their everyday experiences to speak on behalf of their injuries and pain which became central to the social worlds prominently represented in domestic worker organizing. While interacting with "othered" versions of themselves, they were simultaneously imagining something else. Languages of pain and rationality limited worker imaginaries, but powerful were the fleeting instances in which workers queered dominant narratives in order to engage in what Jose Esteban Muñoz calls "a queer world-

making project proposing a possibility and a sense of self-knowing, a mode of sociality and relationality"…instead of being clearly available as visible evidence, such queer acts instead exist as "innuendo, gossip, transmitted covertly, not leaving too much of a trace and evaporating at the touch of those who would eliminate its queer possibility" (Muñoz 1996, p.6). Traces of these ephemeral moments reveal domestic workers' alternate mode of narrativity that remain after AB 241 passed in 2013 and SB 1015[31] made the DWBR permanent in California:

> Having breaks and time off to live a life, going to doctor's visits and taking care of my health, talking to my children abroad, living my life…
>
> We know the bill of rights won't solve all our problems, but hopefully with this we'll have to work less and get paid leave to enjoy Christmas Day…New Year!
>
> The extra time and a day off will allow me to play slot machines at the casinos every once in a while, but further organizing needs to be done for immigration reform because I worry that if I win a big prize, they won't want to give it to me because I am undocumented!

If we consider the speculative aspects of their statements, we can contemplate otherwise obscured social movement contributions to our critical thinking about organizing. These ephemeral moments grant entrance to that which has been locked out of historical, representational, and legislative scripts. An important figure interacting with and contributing to these moments were the children of domestic workers, who participated in the bus rallies and were even featured in Children's Marches organized by the statewide coalition of domestic worker organizations. In these marches, children told their own stories of why the bill should be passed, but most importantly conveyed a shared lived

[31] SB 1015 was signed into law in California on September 12, 2016 by Governor Jerry Brown. SB 1015 made the Domestic Worker's Bill of Rights (AB 241) permanent by removing its 2017 sunset date.

experience with their mothers which complemented the possibilities that could have been, but are still possible if their labor is to be felt the way they have been transformed by it:

> My mother was a domestic worker and she worked three jobs because she did not get overtime and we needed the money…Having this law in place would have changed my childhood. It's a matter of respect and giving people the opportunity to do something for themselves, and not just work for others. (Josselyn, daughter of domestic worker)

Diana, 11-year-old daughter of a MEA domestic worker, similarly spoke about her childhood, and the ways in which she has shared that embodied experience of household labor with her:

> Mi mama me cuenta que desde que yo estaba en su vientre, me llevaba a su lugar de trabajo en otras casas con otras familias. Mi mama hace este trabajo para provenir casa y comida para mis dos hermanas mayores. Con este trabajo pudo obtener un caro para poder llegar a trabajar con otras familias en diferentes lugares. Mi mama tiene que trabajar mas de ocho horas para que no nos falte comida. Cuando nací, mi mama me ponía en su espalda para que ella pudiera seguir trabajando. En el 2012, vine a sacramento para hablar con los legisladores para que pasaran la carta de derechos. Hoy estoy aquí, 4 años después, apoyando la SB 1015, que da dignidad a las trabajadoras del hogar como mi mama—la dignidad de nuestras familias y de las familias que dependen del trabajo que hacen las trabajadoras. Me siento orgullosa de mi mama por ser una chingona para asegurar que su familia esta protegida. Por eso ahora debemos pasar la SB 1015 y proteger a las trabajadoras como mi mama.[32]

[32] English translation: My mom tells me that since I was in her womb, she would take me to her place of work at the homes of other families. My mom does this work to provide food and shelter to my two older sisters. With this job she was able to obtain a car to be able to travel to work with other families in different places. My mom has to work more than eight hours so that we are not left without food. When I was born, my mom would put me on her back so that she would be able to continue working. In 2012, I came to Sacramento to speak with legislators so that they would pass the bill of rights. Today I am here, 4 years later, supporting SB 1015, which gives dignity to household workers like my mom—the dignity of our families and the families that depend on the labor of household workers. I feel proud of my mom for being a chingona for making sure that her family is protected. That is why we need to pass SB 1015 and protect household workers like my mom.

Diana's testimony revealed a profound perspective of her mother's body as she carried her along with her both in pregnancy and after her birth to the homes she would clean. She described, "Cuando nací, mi mama me ponía en su espalda para que ella pudiera seguir trabajando/ When I was born, my mother would put me on her back so that she can continue working," evoking what many domestic workers have recounted which is their difficulty of having accessible childcare, yet also preferring domestic work for its flexibility to be able to take their children with them to work. Diana became an extension of her mother's body, leaving her with a unique understanding of the power of her mother's labor, from providing food and shelter to her two older sisters who were back in her country of origin, to sustaining her family in the U.S., and not to mention the multiple employers' families that relied on her as well. Describing her as a superhero, una *chingona*, Diana's narrative ended with a demand for rights and labor protections for domestic workers like her mother, so that they can be respected with dignity.

The language of that claim, again, returned to legal reasoning which force immigrants and their families to display the validity for them to be here—she protects you, therefore you should protect her. This legal reasoning sustains idioms of servility, which are momentarily disrupted by statements such as Josselyn's, who defines dignity as giving people "the opportunity to do something for themselves, and not just work for others" (personal communication, August 2016). It continues the social tendency to view domestic work (paid and unpaid) not as an occupation taken on by women to benefit themselves and their own families, but rather performed to advance the interests of employers.

Two years after this rally, I sat with MEA organizers to reflect upon the passing of AB 241, the role that they played in the statewide movement to pass and make permanent the DWBR and discuss emerging themes and challenges. At this time, the statewide coalition was preoccupied with strategies around enforcement of the bill, and ways to educate domestic workers about their rights. Although MEA was very much a part of this coalition and became deeply involved in its development, I became more interested in what they thought in regards to how the DWBR had begun to change their lives, what they saw as limitations, and how they were beginning to radically question dominant organizing models that had recently imbued them with collective meaning as rights-bearing subjects. What I found was that tensions still present in their workplace, with their families, and in their community reflected a broad heterogeneity of worker manifestations originating in a complex region such as Los Angeles not encompassed by the DWBR and its sequential, homogenous representations.

Legislation as Strategy

Much of organizing is about creating space, a sort of home where embodied memories come in and out, conjuring possibilities for political and social justice. As social movement and labor scholars would note, organizing—in addition to being experimental, temporal, and incomplete—does not cease to be a terrain where boundaries of identity are reworked. One question that emerged is, what happens when organizers achieve what they want? Research has examined the impact of campaign wins, making note of the episodic nature of rights-based campaigns and the continued marginalization of issues that continue to impact the immigrant community (Adam 2017). Legislative wins within nation-state contexts have also been examined to rethink the politics of rights and

recognition in relation to logics of citizenship and borders; specifically, the "decidedly *queer* politics" that challenge such regimes of immigration and border control and pry open new sites for theorizing migration and movement politics (White 2014; p. 977). According to White, this means processing the entanglement between tactics and imaginaries, what Judith Butler calls a 'performative contradiction' at the heart of any possibility for radical change: "the contradiction must be relied on, exposed, and worked on to move toward something new. There seems to be no other way" (Butler and Spivak 2007; p. 67, cited in White 2014). Goldberg agrees that while legislative empowerment is crucial for enacting rights, it still creates a series of patterns that reflects "a standing tension in the legislative efforts of domestic workers' organizations: they set out to expand the realm of labor protections, but they are channeled into a struggle for equal inclusion" (2015, p.151). This tension has made it possible for organizations to reflect on their strategies of outreach and base-building and challenge their leadership development component of organizing towards one that engages further with the broader domestic worker population in order to build a larger social network (Goldberg 2015). Hardt and Negri would argue that in order for social movements to move towards something new, in the form of meaningful lasting change, the multitude must drive strategy and create effective modes of assembly and decision-making structures. Although rights-wins carry predetermined limitations, such insights push us toward seeing them as possibilities towards a much different future, despite arriving there using restrictive tactics. MEA, and its housing organization IDEPSCA, has contemplated the complexities of these very issues.

In one of my visits with MEA at IDEPSCA, Sujey shared with me how the past has been rearranged and continues to shift the direction of their organizing. Apologizing for being late, she mentions having been at the airport to support a member who had been held after returning from El Salvador. Trump had placed a travel ban that month in 2017, and from that point she discussed the importance of supporting their organizers, a majority of them from Central America, with their immigration status and getting them legal support. Having come from New York with an expansive wealth of knowledge in community organizing, she recognizes a learning moment where she says she needs to reflect and more fully comprehend the history of both the organization and the Central American immigrant community that made the organization possible. Speaking to her interactions in the space, formerly a refugee house, where her office once held bunk beds and the bathroom still has a shower, I can't help but think of the space as a sort of archive, the type described by Lauzon not as a 'home" for an official collective memory, but rather "an impossible archive for memories of loss, terror, and displacement"… one that "clings to its capacity to accommodate what remains of loss but also recognize their ontological provisionality" (2015, p.198). Indexing an elusive array of untraceable materiality, it is clear that the past cannot be recovered with any certainty but can be seen as points of departure for new forms of organizing. Understanding that the space is a site where a community was formed out of an experience of loss, she reiterates challenging what organizing means today, which to the group means becoming more intentional and relational, rather than seeing organizing as a purely transactional relationship. Being intentional and relational means collectively processing the ways that they are tied to each other as a community beyond their organization. They were and continue to do this

through coalition building within the larger campaign for rights. However, as their own collective, they have been able to accomplish this by challenging identity—from the habituation of pain which marked the limits of what they can articulate as a 'domestic worker' and 'migrant,' to the dissolution of those exact categories in order to reimagine capacity outside servitude and citizenship, and materialize more affirmative structures of engagement and transformation.

To better tackle this, MEA conducted a survey in the local community where they sought to understand the present needs of workers and examine areas for further growth. Domestic workers at MEA echoed that the DWBR, or legislation in general, will never reflect the experiences of workers, stating that organizing work is never built around legislation, it has to be the other way around. They discussed that through the decades-long coalition building that took place in California, specifically between San Francisco and Los Angeles, workers made the seemingly impossible happen. They built a movement that brought together multiple domestic worker organizations and built relationships with allies across racial and ethnic lines. The DWBR became a compelling narrative for workers to get engaged, and that is how MEA organizers went from simply frequenting the space to attend workshops or look for jobs, to then becoming leaders in a movement. The movement allowed them to ask questions and learn about how legislation and policy works, and how it can be mobilized in their interest. "People shouldn't look at legislation as the answer, I think it's a strategy," said Sujey, who continued by stating that although the CA DWBR passed and has been made permanent, it should not end with the issue of enforcement. Examining its limitations brought forth an interesting conversation about how legislation as strategy can continue to open up opportunities to talk about the

complexity of experiences, so that according to Sujey, workers can "start to break down those structures and actually see in other ways, so that they can come to their own realizations about the validity or not of a strategy or of engaging with a policy in a certain way" (2017). Listening to their reflections was like traveling back in time, as familiar themes and issues were conjured in their speculation about how they envision moving forward with a DWBR in hand. There was a return to the question of organizational history and capacity, worker identity, solidarity, sustainability, and space.

Discussions around the landscape of organizing and using DWBR legislation as strategy to open up more opportunities for social justice at the time were centered on processing what organizing means and examining the ambivalent and contested nature of their demands, identities, and histories. After conducting a survey of their community, MEA came to a realization that many of the workers are not coming to their space and interested in getting involved due to increased precarious situations as a result of housing, temporary jobs, and navigating immigration status. In addition, there was an issue that came up with L.A.'s complex geographical arrangement and persistent racial segregation, which continues to make it difficult for workers to travel between home and their workplaces. The director of the organization noted, "People don't have a public transit infrastructure that works for them, so I think coalition work, just practically speaking, is so much harder here…in addition to Los Angeles being segregated, altogether, it poses some real practical challenges to organizing" (personal communication, 2017). Although many of them live in Pico-Union where the organization sits, most of the homes they work at are further out, making their 2-3 hour trips back home tiresome and late into the night. This echoes Edward Soja's work on spatial injustice in the city as it pertains to

labor and public transportation, when he observes that increased poverty and social polarization had worsened the problems for transit-dependent low-wage workers such as domestic workers and gardeners, who were forced to hold multiple jobs "both sequentially and simultaneously" requiring travel to multiple sites across the city (2010, p. xi).[33] This spatial organization of power has shifted the ways workers may or may not identify themselves under the fraught identity category of "domestic worker" as it is defined in the DWBR—a worker to be recognized as deserving of basic labor rights protections dictated by an 8-hour workday, in one location and under one employer. The diversity of work that entails being a domestic worker is complex and domestic workers have begun to observe the disproportionate impacts of certain groups over others, as it pertains to race, ethnicity, gender, and immigration status. In addition to coming together under the category of 'domestic worker,' a majority of domestic worker organizations organize on the basis of shared ethnic and racial identity. When building the campaign to pass the DWBR, this network of organizations met to create a list of demands, which according to one worker, dwindled down to one issue which was overtime protection and regulation. She states, "overtime regulation does not impact the majority of the workers that IDEPSCA represents, the majority of workers here are house cleaners, they're not live-in caregivers. I don't want to minimize [it]. It does impact a large population of domestic work. It's just not the Latina immigrant household worker" (MEA, personal

[33] The fight for a living wage, which has historically fostered campaigns and labor-community alliances among the immigrant working community in Los Angeles, has considered the spatiality of labor and social movements to challenge the social arrangements of neoconservative power. See (Wilton and Crawford 2002).

communication, 2017). Household workers, what they prefer to be called at MEA, described cleaning multiple homes in a day, therefore not being able to benefit from the protections of an 8-hour workday, the right to a lunchbreak, and overtime pay.[34] The workers described cleaning 3-4 houses a day, where they are expected to clean at an accelerated pace for the same price they would normally clean a house. This complicated efforts to do outreach and educate workers on their rights, in addition to strengthening capacity to sustain and continue labor movement organizing in the community. They asked, "How do we get more workers protected, informed, and involved in organizing to continue the movement? How do you organize a group of women who aren't directly impacted by a specific piece of legislation? How do you get people excited about a law that does not directly impact them?" (MEA, personal communication, 2017). Despite presenting an organizing challenge, workers reiterated that it all came down to an issue of solidarity and moving through inter-ethnic tensions. "It was a real exercise in building solidarity and closeness with those who were directly impacted, which is a majority of Pilipino workers. We connected and worked alongside these groups to develop good relationships with them" (MEA, personal communication, 2017). The rights-based campaign simultaneously contained and undermined the formation of a domestic worker collective identity, as hierarchal power was reproduced through the centering of certain experiences. However, it was clear that the immediate outcomes of the DWBR win was not the focus of their efforts; it was rather about expanding the potentiality of their

[34] See: https://www.cadomesticworkers.org/know-your-rights/right-to-overtime/

movement to implement more lasting impacts on their everyday life and work experiences.

Although the factors that have contributed to displacement and the increased barriers to form community for social justice are numerous, it has forced workers to come up with more creative visions to depart from the spatial norms of their service employment, but also identity. Rosenbaum, for example, has written about the difficulty of organizing immigrant women on the basis of their identity as domestic workers—the occupational category did not resonate entirely with women who take up this type of work. She notes that a particular job does not define their day to day life in this country, but rather migration and learning to survive in a new place (Rosenbaum 2016; p.189). While I agree with Rosenbaum, I also think that domestic workers, whether they identify with that category or not, have already problematized the fixed definitions of 'domestic worker' through their organizing, as MEA has shown with their speculative visions of what legal recognition can accomplish through its reconfiguration to meet their needs. One MEA organizer pointed to this topic in a conversation that I had with her:

> I think one of the challenges prior to us doing our survey is that we also made some assumptions about who the Latina immigrant domestic worker [is]…and I think one of the things we realized is that a lot of domestic workers don't call themselves domestic workers. A lot of people who do domestic work don't see themselves that way. But I think as we started to enter and have deeper conversations…of the 52 weeks of the years, 50 of those weeks we had a Mujeres en Acción meeting…Every Wednesday here, and it was really intentional, we really wanted to build up that solidarity and its through that creation of that space that we realized, "Wait a minute, you don't identify as a household worker, but you do do that work?" It's like in between all these other gigs. So there's a lot of fluidity between women's low wage work and the work that we do at home as mothers, wives, as partners, etc. So that became a huge unifying theme for this full year of meetings that we did successfully where we actually built a pilot membership program around that idea of solidarity, around the idea of all women are household workers whether paid or not. And really taking it from that lens, we

> all do this work—some of us are with our kids, con el sobrino, el vecino, este y el otro (with the nephew, the neighbor, this person and that person), right? We're all engaged in this work. So that was a really important theme that helped, and continues to help, as something we're still working on.

The limitations and assumptions discussed created an entry point from where to reconfigure preconceived notions about who the Latina domestic worker is, and in this sense it became an opportunity for growth and engagement in the MEA space. This reflective process revealed a tension between the social locations they inhabit as multifaceted subjects (in highly accelerated, global multiethnic societies, with borders, increased surveillance technologies, and transnational state violence)—and the difficulties of representing all of these embodied positions under one identity. However, they show a mobilization of the domestic worker identity and a relentless desire to transform solidarity to reflect the fluidity of their lived, contradictory experiences. This has unfolded not only in reiterating an affirmative "we all do this work"—but as women in the Latino community, references a collective form of labor that transcends the unitary self and the boundaries of what domestic work entails. Martha, who is a domestic worker and also works doing outreach at MEA, talked about further learning from domestic workers and the urgent issues that mothers and families are currently encountering. She adds, "We can't simply ask workers to be activists, to organize and engage in a certain way, we have to understand their experiences and how that can shape our new strategies for making legislation beneficial for us despite its limitations, continue building coalitions and making our labor visible as immigrant women, and most importantly, offering them the resources that they need" (personal communication, 2017). Traveling at 5am on bus through the long stretch of Wilshire Blvd, Martha shows her vision of

opening out toward an empowering connection to others, "indexed on affirmation and mutual specification, not on the dialectics of recognition and lack" (Braidotti, 2011, p. 3). Altogether, they questioned assumptions of what legislation can mean to them, the fixity of the domestic worker identity, and the Latina immigrant experience that also demands a dynamic interpretation of its historical, social, and political [forces] that continue to shape its embodied experience.

Making up for Lost Time

The movement for domestic workers' rights in the U.S. is far-reaching and complex. As the DWBR movement in the last decade has shown, there continues to be a relentless spirit to work towards what was begun a century ago—address the colonial legacy of slavery present in domestic work, value it as more than women's work, and demand its respect and dignity through fair wages and rights. Through an analysis of domestic worker organizing in historical, legislative, and organizational documents, it became apparent that the worker's body was perpetually reinscribed as a body in pain, in order to justify demands for protections and rights. Historically, as Du Bois' study showed, surveys served as reliable sociological methods to measure occupational injuries as a way to demonstrate oppression and racial discrimination, offering reform as a solution to elevate the occupation to the scientific demands of industrial progress. Although Du Bois sought to transform the field of sociology to work toward dismantling oppression, his study on black household workers alongside Isabel Eaton was revealed to have been sponsored for demographic and epidemiological purposes to inform eugenics movements exploding at the time. An analysis of the labor archives of Union WAGE also used the survey as a tool to examine the occupational hazards and conditions of domestic workers.

Their responses revealed power dynamics and limited spaces to which they were asked to map pain in an outline of a body, contributing to a strict representative space that had already preconfigured them as docile. Although their efforts were meant to better craft strategies for organizing to demand labor protections as well, responses revealed a hesitance to speak in the language offered to them, which was limited to articulating pain exempt from the socio-political power structures that were impacting their everyday lives, hence limiting them from opportunities to lead their own movement. Constructing workers as vulnerable presumed compromised capacity—in order to claim and bestow on them rights, it necessitated uncompromised capacity. As Ally would note, being incorporated "limited domestic workers' capacities to inhabit the possibilities it suggests" (Ally, 2010, p.189). The tensions present in the efforts to transform the occupation of domestic work reflected a series of practices and regimes in which bodies became events themselves. On one hand, the depictions of white, national anxieties over the disappearance of their bodies facilitated the familiar colonial discourse of ambiguous inclusivity premised on their availability as commodities. On the other, resistance practices became pressured to demonstrate a tolerance to the state, a racial project that functioned to manage dissent by marking worker's bodies as compliant. This resulted in the episodic nature of organizing, employing similar strategies that articulated the radical potential of the workforces, while relying on the creation of a "community of shared experience and suffering" (Nadasen, 2016, p. 17). This discourse of concealment resulted in the erasure of the memory of their pain, one that essentially held on to a fixed, singular version of pain that was to be reimagined by the state to promote a class deserving of protections. Aware of this impossible logic of rights extended on the basis of injury,

domestic workers confronted the irreconcilable tension between disembodied rights and embodied intimacy by consciously disowning the more disabling practices of the state. Overall, a prominent tension remained through this examination of historical documents. There was a constant negotiation of what is asked to be seen, and what remains in the shadows. Complicating this absence-presence bind continues to be a life-long project that is passed down through time, one that has presented itself as somewhat irresolvable.

The DWBR movement has shown that domestic workers are in the best position to craft strategies, organize more workers, and transform the occupation because they understand it best. By developing leadership among domestic workers, they become capable of controlling their own representation and narrative. They redefine organizing as a nomadic experimental project that is never about unity via identity, but about making connections across race, gender, and class lines. The lines of recognition ask to consider not the limitations of intersectionality, but the descriptive content of identity categories and the narratives on which they are based have privileged some experiences and excluded others (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1298). Crenshaw reflects on the need to privilege the mobility of narratives and identities as they continuously respond to the challenges of contemporary society, emphasizing the importance of "collaborative efforts across disciplines, sectors, and national contexts" (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013, p. 807). This dimension of destabilizing narratives and identities allies with Braidotti's critique of a unitary identity as a structure with a complex language that "we inhabit but do not control" (2014, p. 228). It points to a process of disidentification that can work simultaneously to actualize identities and their historical narratives *and* mobilize multiple

processes of becoming.[35] Both can co-exist, as Braidotti notes, as a multidirectional practice of constructing possible futures "by rewinding toward forgotten or half-sustained possibilities" (2014, p. 236). This methodological practice elucidates the embodied domestic worker experience across the discursive spaces of organizing, transgenerational dynamics, and speculative visions of resistance and the future.[36] It acknowledges those moments of estrangement that migration offers and therefore opens the conversations towards the possibility of coalitional, transformative relations across unforeseen sites.

[35] Jose Esteban Muñoz's seminal work *Disidentification: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999) is foundational to my understanding of this process. His theorization argues that disidentification is at its core, a survival strategy against a public sphere that punishes and erases subjects that do not conform to normative citizenship, a process that reformats memory to elucidate fragments of self-formation, and interrogates identity discourses and its failures so as to not shame or necessarily reject but rather redefine to establish new possibilities (1999). I find especially important his argument that this process will always echo "the materially prescriptive cultural locus of any identification" (1999, p. 30) as this also characterizes the migrant experience, in addition to disidentification as "*not always* [being] an adequate strategy of resistance or survival for all minority subjects" (1999, p. 5 emphasis not mine).

[36] Curtis Marez's notion of "farm worker futurism" (2016) is a useful critique against neo-imperial logics of power and profit that erase transnational labor forces and reproduce heteronormative, linear projections of the future.

Figure 6: Salvadoran refugee family waiting at a Pasadena bus stop after being released from a detention center, 1981.

Source: Los Angeles Herald Examiner Photo Collection

MEA serves as an example of how such contradictions entangled in rights are being reconfigured into strategies for the future, by reflecting on challenges but transforming them with the strengths of their organization. The question they ask themselves is: How do you create possibilities during Trump times, marked by increased displacement, border militarism, detention, deportation and separation? Domestic worker organizers realized the potential in returning to the beginnings of the organization, focusing on popular education to tap into each other's embodied knowledge to collectively understand structures of power and the way they function around issues of work, immigration, and social justice.

According to organizers, it was important to examine how the DWBR can bring forth opportunities for economic development, while also increasing capacity for further organizing around urgent issues that are impacting them. This has also left them reflecting on the sustainability of their organization. This means training and mentoring the younger generation for sustainability, but also to nurturing a new generation of leaders. During an interview, outreach coordinator Martha added, 'If we don't, what does that say about the continuity of our movements?' In a sense, they were already doing this work. The project manager and outreach coordinator both represent the intergenerational link between domestic workers and their children, one who still works as a domestic worker, and the other who is a daughter of a domestic worker. For project manager Carina, organizing became her way of processing the complicated emotions and experiences that came with cleaning homes with her mother, and her mother's Salvadoran immigrant experience. They both exchanged powerful conversations about what mothers and children think in respect to their mother's paid household labor. Carina mentioned the irony of being a domestic worker organizer despite her mother's refusal to be a part of the movement, while Martha noted a strong curiosity around what her children think of her work, because as she stated, "my work is part of raising my children, but I don't think my children care" (personal communication, 2017). She also mentioned observing a mother explaining to her daughter at the bus stop the reasons why she does the work that she does: "I clean toilets so that you don't have to do this work when you grow up." This might sound straightforward, but it offers a glimpse to the complicated relationships domestic workers have with their children. It carries a different affective dimension compared to the statements workers shared in their testimonies when

they were fighting for their rights. “See my face, you eat from my hands, you require from my labor” was a way to make the audience feel that which has been devalued and made to disappear. For their children, it was about making a future possible for them—one where they were not limited to being in service to someone else, also implicating their immigrant experience to understand their labor as building a world without fear and violence. Migration and labor as a world-making project is what children understand from a very young age, even if it is not initially processed that way. They see their mother’s labor as a point of departure for understanding the incomplete beginnings of migration, the paradoxes of their labor, and the uncertain memories that are shared, which always leads them to somewhere else. It is through their experiences that more insights can be gathered for altering our understanding of the domestic worker experience. Whereas domestic worker organizing can create an environment where domestic work is acknowledged as work that makes other work possible, domestic work as interpreted through children’s experiences can be understood as a speculative journey to make up for lost time. By reflecting on what their labor can mean in the future, the domestic worker experience can be understood as a force that can never be contained, and one that takes you to places other people can’t go.

CHAPTER 3

CHILDREN, BODIES, WORLDS: DOMESTIC WORK AND THE AFFECTIVE LANDSCAPE OF PAIN AND ITS MEMORY

> Nevertheless, the need to not measure our lives by the demands and values of the capitalist labor market was always assumed, and at times openly affirmed, as a principle that should guide the reproduction of our lives. Even today, the efforts that my mother made to develop in us a sense of our own value give me strength to face difficult situations. What often saves me when I cannot protect myself is my commitment to protect her work and myself as the child to whom it was dedicated.
>
> Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*

> Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us…affect is persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations.
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> Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers"

I am not sure if they know of each other. Vivian and Crista both live in Northern California, only a few miles apart. In 2015, Vivian was thrusted into the local spotlight in Orinda, CA where she was being investigated by her school district for not meeting residency requirements to enroll at her elementary school. She was 7 years old. Vivian's mother works as a live-in domestic worker, and they both share a room in her mother's employer's house. On the weekends, they visit their grandmother who lives outside of town in Bay Point. As one of the only few Latina students at her predominantly white school, the school profiled her and hired a private investigator to determine if she did in fact live within district boundaries. The investigator determined she did not, and Vivian was suspended from her school.

At 14 years old, Crista became one of the lead plaintiffs in the class action suit Crista Ramos, et al., v. Kirstjen Nielsen, et al. In January of 2018, President Donald Trump announced his plans to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) granted to immigrants from Nicaragua, Haiti, Sudan, and El Salvador (and later Honduras), forcing them to leave the country or face deportation. In May of that year, Crista along with several other U.S. citizen children of TPS recipients and the TPS-recipient parents themselves, sued the federal government for violating their rights. Filed by the ACLU and the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON), the lawsuit argues that the administration's change in the interpretation of the TPS statute is a violation of the law, since it is grounded in racial discrimination. It also addresses the violation of the rights of U.S. citizen children, who are being forced by the termination of TPS to choose between their right to stay in the country, and their right to be raised by and live with their parents and family. According to the lawsuit, more than 270,000 U.S. citizen children have at least one parent with TPS, many of them still in school. It states, "It is equally well established that families have a fundamental right to live together without unwarranted government interference" and hence they should not be compelled "to make the impossible choice of forgoing one of these rights for the other" (Crista Ramos, et al., 2018).

Both of these cases present extraordinary circumstances imposed by the state, placing the children of immigrants as central figures in their family's immigrant experience. Vivian's case ended up being challenged by her mother's employer, Miriam Storch, who was able and willing to challenge the district's decision, which ended up being overturned. Vivian's case inspired two legislative bills—SB 200, which allows

children of domestic workers to be able to attend school in the district where their parents work and reside, and AB 1101 which sets new policy on the use of private investigators for the school district. The local community gathered in support of Vivian, stating that no child should be subjected to discrimination because of how they look or where their parents work, and that domestic workers should not have to choose between their children and their work. In a public statement, Miriam said, "The law should support any arrangement that keeps children with their parents and enrolled in school where the parents can reasonably participate in and support the child's academic experience" (Gutierrez, 2015).

In the case of Crista, a U.S. District Judge issued a preliminary injunction blocking the administration's plan to terminate TPS until a full trial is held, citing Trump's repeatedly expressed racism where he referred to Central Americans as coming from "shithole countries."[37] Speaking to the burden that children in immigrant families carry, Crista emphasized that fear of deportation should not be a part of any child's life. "My goal is to keep my family and the other families together," she said. "So that me and

[37] The interpretation of TPS by the Trump administration sought to undermine any consideration of conditions that has prevented individuals from returning safely to their country of origin. In addition, it has disregarded any consideration of the lives that TPS recipients have formed here in the U.S., many of them making a life for themselves here, whether it be forming families and/or developing ties in their community. These conditions, or 'extraordinary circumstances' can be social and economic crises that previous administrations considered in their continued designation. These social or economic crises, which has made life untenable for people, has resulted in increased patterns of migration of children and families still fleeing their countries today. To target this TPS designation among many others and deny the conditions in their countries also helps justify attacks against Central American migrants seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border today.

my brother and the other kids in these families can go on with our life, and education and plans" (Jhabvala Romero, 2018). These two cases present us with a contemporary account of xenophobic, racialized state violence against immigrant families, where parents and their children continue to be separated and detained at the U.S.- Mexico border. Vivian and Crista may have never met, but their stories intersect. They gesture towards the shifting arrangements of family as a result of continued and increased racial hostility targeting immigrants, fixing children within the ambiguous boundaries of family, home, labor, and immigration law.

For children of immigrant families, the movement of violence and resistance becomes a daily experience that extends into the multiple spaces they are intimately entangled in. This includes schools and the blurred boundaries between work and home, where their ties extend families, generations and borders. They become strategically fixed within the ever-shifting boundaries of law and policy, marking them as uncertain figures and denying their role in disrupting discourses that make migrants and their families appear to be temporary, and disposable. Vivian's case presents a circumstance where her living arrangement with her mom as a live-in domestic worker completely challenged hegemonic constructions of work, home and family, and neighborhood racial segregation where she alternated between multiple worlds—living with her mom and her employer's family during the week, attending a predominantly white school, and visiting with her grandmother on the weekends. In the little media coverage that her case brought, it was shown that her life living with her mother and the employer's family was that of being 'part of the family,' a narrative that although problematic, strengthened her case against the school district to prove that she did in fact live in the home despite her mother's work

arrangement. The employer gave compassionate public testimonies describing her "blended family," where Vivian and her mother have their own bedroom in the house with Vivian's clothing and toys, and where "she even has her own bathroom where she got to pick the paint color: pink" and "their own shelf for food in the refrigerator and their own cupboard in the kitchen to hold the girl's cereal, vitamins and allergy medicine" (Gafni 2014). Verifying Vivian's presence through her toys spread out throughout her home, and sharing brief translations of her mother's sentiment towards the entire issue revealed power relations that denied Vivian's mother a voice in determining her daughter's well-being, never being contacted by the school to address their concerns, and having been forced to relinquish guardianship over her daughter to the employer in order for her to remain at her school. This echoes the familiar colonial trope of immigrant mothers and their children as threats and burdens to the white supremacist, masculinist rendition of nation, as helpless beings incapable of deciding their future for themselves and being at the mercy of their white masters' compassion. Their bodies are frequently embedded in these gendered and racial discourses of exclusion where surveillance and containment reflect experiences of policing in the communities, schools and homes where they work, and where family separation and/or deportations negatively impact immigrant families' everyday lives. Similar to Crista, Vivian's mother described the disruption that these processes have on daily life, stating: "I feel in this community that no one wants us here, or my daughter here. I never wanted this to happen to us. All I want is my daughter to go to school and get an education. This has been very depressing for me, for my daughter" (Gafni 2014).

Children, Bodies, Worlds

The stories of Vivian and Crista are very familiar to the experiences of the adult children of domestic workers that I interviewed for this research. It is also very familiar to me. The experience of migration, having a mixed-status family with extended kin, maintaining transnational ties, and participating from a very young age with our parent's occupation as domestic workers and with employers' families is only but a set of relations that connect us. The legislative cases shared from the DWBR to Vivian's SB 200 and TPS become entry points to understanding the domestic worker and immigrant experience, as it shared between mothers, and, the mostly daughters, children who have been on the forefront of social justice struggles in defense of immigrant and labor rights. It offers a very limited view of not only the diversity of these experiences, but also a more complex insight of the everyday negotiations in which children engage. These negotiations reveal a transformation of perspectives through time, a constant desire to process and affirm the difficult sacrifices their mothers have gone through while reconnecting with its ongoing creative potential. This nomadic, embodied approach yields glimpses of their mothers' and families' multidimensional histories that do not begin when they cross the border into the U.S., but emerge as episodic, affective spaces of memory that challenge official, national narratives of displacement and migration from Central America and Mexico. Their collective embodied knowledge marks a reframing that goes beyond issues of legality and against dominant social scripts that subordinate intergenerational family trauma/pain to ahistorical master narratives of domestic workers as assimilated or saved.

This chapter examines the embodied experiences of adult children of domestic workers who have accompanied their mothers to work for most of their lives. Inspired by Vivian's story and her photograph released during her case (Figure 1), I can't help but feel an affective, personal connection to her bodily language, of her hiding behind her doll, curious yet not wanting to be seen completely, perhaps feeling safer in that space where she imagines something else. I also can't help but wonder about the many worlds she navigates and imagines. Hence, this chapter will pay attention to the ways they remember and narrate their shared experiences with their mothers, and what that reveals in regards to the nomadic, affective potential of migration, labor, pain, and its memory. Most of the literature on domestic workers and their families focuses on the worker's transnational motherhood experience and the children left behind, as well as the perspectives of employers and their children. The embodied experiences of the children interviewed bridge the conversation between these themes in the literature. They dialogue with the memory of their labor and offer alternate sensibilities to this experience, following the movements, language, and palpable expressions of pain and the social world that is defined by it. In order to understand this social world, I focus on the simultaneity of domesticity as inhabiting and being in multiple spaces at once, moving in and out of power relations that enforce containment and accelerate productivity, while also deviating temporarily from such management of their labor and bodies. To understand the everyday flows, rhythms, and movements of power and potentiality, I use Castañeda's concept of figuration to trace how power gives the 'child' of a domestic worker a particular form of embodiment and figured in ways that speak to the making of worlds (2002, p.16). This means how the child is figured "as an instance of the "human""

through which a particular history can be told—one where the condition of childhood and its potentiality is normalized for its value to secure and continue transnational, developmentalist trajectories (2002, pp. 5-13).[38] In addition, I borrow from Seigworth and Gregg's approach to affect theory, where borrowing from Barthes, they seek to understand the changeability of affective moments between two moments, two spaces that rapidly modify into shimmer—intensities that "outplay the paradigm" and elude easy polarities, residing in the in-between where a world's or a body's interleavings project a gradience through concentration and speed, through odor, luminosity, and comportment (2010, p. 10-11). This inventory of shimmers seeks to understand not just institutional power but affective moments of nuance between states and changes, the "mixed-capacities of the in-between" that arrive almost simultaneously as a rhythm, a fold, a timing, a habit, a contour, or a shape…to mark the passages of intensities (whether dimming or accentuating) in body-to-body/world-body mutual imbrication" (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, p. 13). By focusing on this relationality that emerges and overspills as memories that expand into "shimmering relays" between domestic workers and their children, these theoretical insights will help analyze how children process the way they see themselves figured [as active participants] in their mother's labor experience and in the contestable worlds that are brought into being by their labor. As adults reflecting on their childhood, they return not to revisit or reappropriate the child and the memory of the worlds they were in to extract from and then leave behind, but rather to treat as sacred the

[38] Castañeda's concept of figuration offers an account of the domains of practice and significance that build particular figurations of the child, and its prolific uses across cultural sites. It describes its appearances but does not seek to understand how it bears on and affects actual children. (See 2002, p. 3).

'constellation of shimmers'[39] that continue to transform and bring life to a collectivity to come.

Figure 7: Vivian, Photographed with her favorite Justin Bieber doll

Photograph by Dan Honda, Bay Area News Group

A Constellation of Shimmers

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[39] In her article, "Constellations: Toward a Radical Questioning of Dominant Curatorial Models," Mari Carmen Rodriguez proposes the idea of a constellation, a curatorial model that condenses themes by means of luminous points which expose the relationships between artists, their works, and the specific context in which they were produced (Rodriguez 2000, p. 15). Meant to encompass the heterogeneity of artistic manifestations across borders and in a non-sequential pattern, I similarly condense the themes that emerged in my interviews into a "constellation" of shimmers.
I will be using numbers to reference these luminous points that emphasize relationships and context, and not follow a singular concept and/or linear sequence of time. The point is to also allow the reader some space to make their own interpretation of what these luminous points reflect or expose, so that it opens the possibility for multiple encounters depending on the reader's own experience.

The adult children of domestic workers had a very peculiar way of returning to the memories they had, in the telling of their stories. There was definitely an ongoing uncertainty between them all. Many of my interviews were held informally, spread throughout a series of gatherings either as a group, individually, and sometimes even during walks or talks over the phone. A luminous point in the ways they retold their experiences was this uncertainty of where things began, how they took place, and the duration of such events. This uncertainty is seen in diverse ways, through the telling of a particular sensory memory they vividly remember, or the almost indistinct recollection of a series of people, sites, and events.

Leslie's narrative is one that points to both these characteristics. As she began her story, she acknowledged not being able to remember many details about her mother's work cleaning homes and being a nanny, admitting that she relied on her mother's recent accounts of how she was during her childhood when she accompanied her mother to work. As she went on a journey recalling her childhood, she shared her desperation of not being able to remember or recall specific memories. Then almost unexpectedly she said, "One of the only memories I can remember is being at a beachfront home and playing outside, while my mother cleaned the house, and just being so happy…then suddenly I started running inside and I slammed into a sliding glass door" (personal communication, 2016). She continued by stating, "After talking to my mom, it overwhelmed me! It brought a lot of emotions that I thought weren't there anymore. Or that didn't even exist, that I wasn't even aware of" (2016). The memory of crashing into the glass door was telling in so many ways. It revealed an immediate force that shook her from being in a delusional state, to then abruptly hitting the limits of the in-between space that separated

her from her mother during a time of work. It can also be interpreted as a moment that marked one of the last and only memories she retained, and the moment from where the boundaries between her memories and that of her mother's were blurred. In addition, it also says something about the seeming transparency of class distinction, and even the openness of the home and life of the people whose homes her mother cleaned—the crossing of such solid barriers shaking her back into reality and for others proving to be fatal. As she continued to recall her later experiences, she constructed certain events and details based on recent conversations she had with her mother as an adult. This is where many of her emotions were accentuated, where she shared her mother recalling times she was mistreated by employers and employer's children, being asked for her complete time which she resented since it required her to leave her children behind. Upset at this and her mother telling her that she was ashamed of her work growing up, Leslie resented herself for not being a better child and not making life easier for her mother during a difficult time in her life. "She told me this before but I totally forgot! Once she was 35, she promised herself she wasn't gonna clean houses anymore. Yeah…" (2016).

Evelin's way of narrating memory was similarly one of uncertainty shaped by the variability of her memories. Sitting at a park surrounded by freeways and nearby homes buzzing with music, Evelin interwove her narrative with repetitiveness and phrases that almost came off as questions. In a way it was as if she was seeking assurance, but also repeating memories to return to them continuously or even a few minutes later, so as to remind you of what occurred even if its retelling lacked a consistent pattern. As she told her story, new memories emerged, like when she recalled how her mom began cleaning houses, entangled with her family's long history of migration and reunification. These

fragments of memories revealed events she had strong opinions about. In this excerpt, she narrates how her mother got into cleaning houses:

> I think she came to the U.S.
> Um, early 20's, she told me that she came,
> I think on her own or with friends.
> I think at that time both of her families started migrating to the U.S.
> So they all came together because,
> Yeah one by one they all started coming over here.
> I think my mom said that her grandma first started going to the U.S.
> because she would actually,
> I don't know if she would clean houses over here,
> and then would go back or something like that?
> But eventually like, they all started migrating and they ended up staying,
> like in the U.S.
> So my mom left when she was like in her early, in her early 20's and
> I think some of my uncles or something were already, already here in the U.S.
> So eventually, I think my grandma was gonna go too,
> So then they took off and migrated to the U.S.

The ambivalence that moved throughout this excerpt is highlighted by the repetitive "I think" and "So then" that both bridge and disrupt the continuity of what might have occurred in linear time. It is interesting to note how in recalling her mother's migration story, she simultaneously collapses her mother's entire family history into a gradual relocation that began with her grandmother doing (or not) temporary domestic work, returning (or not) to eventually have her entire family in the U.S. She states, "I think she came to the U.S.," a likely event which she related as "migrating to," "going to," and "were already, already here in the U.S." (personal communication, 2016). Shortly after, she comes to a point where she somewhat acknowledges her mother's work cleaning houses:

> And yeah, when she came over here, I remember her telling me,
> I don't know where she first started living
> but her connection I would say was, um, her younger brother
> who was already here in the U.S. and from him like they already,

like… had found connection or like networking thing
that I don't know if she started cleaning houses or something,
from people they already knew,
from people they were already working for.
And when my mom was living in Guatemala, she did go to school
and she did like accounting
but then when she came over here
she just, she would clean houses from what I remember,
from when I was little.

In addition to following her recollection of memories which tell the story of migration before war in her country of Guatemala, and a sustained transnational network of labor that began with her grandmother before she even migrated, Evelin emphasized conflicting accounts as they were told to her or as she processed them to consolidate the unresolved tensions embedded within them. One tension that emerged as seen in this account was her mother going from studying accounting, to just cleaning houses, a sentiment that briefly insinuates a hesitance to dwell on that experience of work as a defining characteristic of who her mother is. This hesitance is also seen as she continued telling her mother's family migration story as told to her by her uncle. She said, "it was as if he was holding back, keeping secrets," which reminded me of memory and erasure, what is conveniently recalled, and what is more painful to resurface. Although she cannot confirm what those secrets are, she does hint at her uncle's discomfort at her asking too many questions, and it is from those silences in her family's migration story that she builds her own interpretation of what might have occurred. This interpretation is one of fleeing persecution due to the armed conflict in Guatemala, an experience that her family does not talk too much about but makes fleeting references to during family gatherings. This reminds me of what Bui calls the postmemory generation's way of mediating the past and generating their own account based on painful family events that may have

occurred, a refugee repertoire that is affectively communicated through bodily reorientations across space and time (2016, p. 114). Furthermore, this quick movement between overlapping narrations resists giving in to actual accounts, what Pandolfo would call "epistemic uncertainty" which "points to a radical doubting of identity, a threshold of madness, which is formulated in text as a questioning of the origin, in the genealogical sense of kinship and filiations and in the historical sense of a possible account of the past" (Pandolfo 2008, p. 67). It results in the impossibility to reconstruct one's own account of the past, let alone that of the family as it is continuously informed by its reliance with each other and the unknown, a multidimensional experience that reverberates within later generations.

Uncertainty is not always so clear and direct. In other narratives, some retold their memories of their childhood experience accompanying their mothers to work in a routinized, chronological manner. Their stories conveyed so much detail as the full weight of the long days of work implicated their bodies and the ways they came to experience the memories they shared with their mothers. Going by the days of the week, the employers' homes scheduled for each day and her mother's experience in each one, Angie realizes that it's the only way she can remember, "By the days, in that order, I don't know why! I think I just became my mom, like a routine!" (personal communication, 2016). I met Angie a few years ago at school and connected through our shared interest in archival research, where we got to learn about our research topics. As I interviewed at her home, a current of sounds from the busy street just outside her window almost agreed with her hurried, calculated account of events:

> All the employers, I've met them either informally or I've just shown up because my mom has called me and like "Angie I need help can you come at this time, can you meet me at this time?" So I know for Tuesday, she recently got a new job with this woman her name is Laura, she has cats and my mom hates cats! She has to deal with them, and my mom is kinda required to give the cats food, although that's not what we consider domestic work, but she's required to give them food, but its light work with her. With Marcy it's also light work it's just dusting and cleaning silver and yeah it's not really much. So that's Monday with Marcy...Tuesday with Laura it's just the cats and just light cleaning. Wednesday she works with this woman, her name is Sharon. Sharon I've met her as well, she is disabled and she can't speak well, only the nurses understand what she is trying to say, so I've never gone to her house in particular because my mom has issues with some of the nurses that work there. They think that because my mom is undocumented, they could take advantage of that and always threaten her with stuff and they force her to clean the carpets although that's not required in her job. And that angers me because my mom says that "Me quita tiempo" (it takes time away from my schedule). My mom already has a certain time, at this time I need to be done in order to go and do this and this and this--she already has her routine set up. And then Thursdays she back with Marcy, which is just a continuation of laundry, it just depends, and Friday--this is the house where I've had to get involved and they actually don't like me, they don't like me coming over, but I still go, I don't go into their home, but I stay outside and I wait for my mom in the car. She works with this lady called Martin. She's a very conservative, Jewish woman. I mentioned to my mom because she would always tell me that she didn't want to go to work on Fridays, and I told her "What's going on?" (Personal communication, 2016).

Although seemingly more organized, Angie's routinized way of narrating memory determined by the rhythms of her mother's work schedule became an invitation to see their shared experience as more than just a tidy recollection of the present past. It was a collapsed account of time dictated by the conditions of the occupation. Even though it was rushed, it was heavy with sentiments towards some of the employers for the way they have treated her mother and herself, and the specific chores that were forced upon her despite them not being part of her occupation. Angie's experience of her mother's work validated experiences that her mother undergoes daily, but also functioned as an interlude of those memories, to say what otherwise goes unnoticed. As Angie continued

telling her story, her mother Irma moved around the house, dusting miniature antiques gifted to her by employers, rearranging photo albums of her daughter's quinceañera, offering snacks, and keeping busy. This caused Angie and I to pause. Irma's continuous cleaning routine, even on her day off, was a way to keep busy and not dwell in rest because according to Angie, her mother does not see rest positively. Pointing to a suitcase by her bedroom door, she tells the story of her mother awaiting confirmation of her approved residency status, so that she can immediately travel to visit her family in Mexico that she has not seen for more than twenty years. "My mom, she started something so beautiful. She sacrificed her body, she sacrificed hours she could have spent with us in order to pay the bills and in order to be able to send money to her family in Mexico, to pay the medical expenses of my tia (aunt), and to help sustain her family" (personal communication, 2016). And just like that, we found ourselves not making a claim to her pain, but inhabiting the space created by it.

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I remember being intrigued by the offer. Every Saturday during the school year, I would accompany my mother to clean the house of a middle-aged man who lived in a spacious 4-bedroom home. My mom always told me about his life and family story. He was divorced, his children were married and had families of their own and his ex-wife lived across the street, in a home he bought for her and that my mom also cleaned. I was always ambivalent about going to this house. Something that stuck the most about this particular employer was that he was very obsessive about the way he wanted his home cleaned. He would leave my mom post-its all over the home with to-dos, which I enjoyed

reading because some included personal notes to himself. They were scattered in odd places like the floor, almost in the pattern of a trail, directing my mom to certain spaces or things that required attention. A lot of this attention to detail went to his large collection of miniature items, many of them staged in one large table that required careful dusting and rearranging to its original spot. I always had the urge to play with these figurines. But instead, my mom instructed me to sit and wait while she finished cleaning. One day, the employer offered me a paid chore. He said, "Go outside, water my plants, and I'll pay you $10." I was ecstatic. As I watered his plants in the backyard, I decided to rinse his windows when all of a sudden, I heard yells from inside saying "Stop, stop!" His windows were open, and the water had fallen directly onto the immaculate table with figurines.

Angie had many stories to share about the families her mother worked for since she was a child, stories that were told to her by the employer's children themselves later as adults, the many experiences her mother shared with her about the families, she worked for, and her experiences as well. "Jennifer met my mom I think when my mom first started working with her mom, so they developed an instant bond because my mom would always help her out, and she was like 'Wow, I wish my mom could do this when I was young'" (2016). Noticing that Jennifer confided a lot of things with her mom, she began to feel a certain kind of way when Jennifer had her own daughter, Sofia. Angie did not articulate jealousy for Jennifer's bond with her mother but was more upset that Jennifer's daughter was undergoing the same neglect Jennifer had experienced from her own parents. Leaving Sofia behind at the home her mother was hired to clean, Angie stated that her mother slowly began to care for the child even though she was not hired to

be a nanny. They developed a bond as well, her mother watching over her while she cleaned the house, and the child always in her company. Here, Angie shares the story that reflected the inevitable influence her mother had with Jennifer's daughter, Sofia:

> "When is Irma coming back, when is Irma coming back?" that was the only thing Sofia would talk about! And...this is actually a funny story that her grandmother Marcy told my mom! They went out to a restaurant and because Sofia was only seeing my mom clean, and she would ask her "what are you doing?" and my mom would always be like "Cleaning the table" so the little girl, once they were eating and everyone was finished, she was like "I'm gonna clean the table!" she grabs her invisible spray and invisible towels and starts cleaning the table in the restaurant, it was a 5-star restaurant and then everybody was just mortified! [laughs]....and then they punished Sofia for that! They said that they were no longer gonna take her out to restaurants because of her lack of "etiquette" I guess!

Sofia seeing Angie's mother, Irma, as a mother figure and emulating her cleaning duties in front of her parents at the restaurant revealed a sharp line between what is expected of her as a white, upper-class child. One of these expectations was instilling a sense of not having to clean after yourself and relying on the service of others, continuing a relation of superiority over the worker to enhance the privileged status of employers and their families. Cleaning was seen as inferior and something to be punished for, even though it is their dirt and mess that workers are picking up after. Interestingly, as Angie continued narrating this moment, she recalled the ways employer's children still remember her mother vividly. "It's interesting she's like 29 or 30 now, and she still remembers my mom cleaning for them, playing dolls with her, cooking her food! She even remembers the type of food my mom made, and she could still savor it! I'm like, 'how far can you go back in your memory?' and she always, she did hold a grudge against my dad for a bit because she said that my dad took my mom away from her...which was interesting" (personal communication, 2016). These bonds, which Angie claimed her mother

developed with the employer's children across three generations in that particular family, still reveals what scholars have identified which are bonds of oppression characterized by verbal and spatial deference and masked by the treatment of being "part of the family" (Romero 1992; Rollins 1985; Nakano Glenn 1986). Their memories later as adults reflect this learned social practice, a nostalgia to return to those times only to sentimentalize and isolate it from any relation to the present, what Seremetakis calls "a consumable unit of time" that prevented the present from any capacity for social transformation (1994, p. 4). Experiences with employer's children accentuated the significance of class and race in their lives, a perspective that for Angie did not come directly but understood through her interactions with them. She emphasized the differences in what they valued and expanded on the many ways her mother attended the children who were left behind. She cared for their well-being, while she simultaneously attended the house. These oftentimes added tasks to their routine, which were not paid for, demanded emotional labor which Angie valued differently. Angie recalls: "I think that something that, something that I remember as a child, was that I didn't understand why my mom was a houseworker in another person's home? Because my mom would always try to have the house clean! No matter what" (personal communication, 2016).

While children of employers were oftentimes left to domestic workers to be cared for, children of domestic workers spent more time alone at home, where they cared for themselves and their siblings. This was another site where differences between families were sharply revealed, as Evelin recalls police entering her home at a young age while her mother was at work:

> I'm like a 5th grader and I was "Oh my god the cops are gonna take us away from my mom" I was crying and crying…I think somebody told them that my mom wasn't home. The older ones were in school and the ones that were left were the elementary ones, which was me and my younger brothers. You know, as Latinos we're not doing anything wrong, but you're still scared of the cops. I was scared because I was little, I was little and scared and I thought that they were going to take me away. And my mom came home, and I don't know what she told them. I'm guessing the cops stayed until my mom got there. But I was just trying to be like, I don't know, I was scared, I was little. I was all crying and stuff, and my mom came home and she was like "Ay no llores mija" and I'm like the cops are here, I thought that they were gonna take us away, what do you mean don't cry! But yeah. I never felt unsafe because my mom wasn't home, I knew that she was working and stuff, but I didn't think the fucking cops were gonna show up! Yeah. (Evelin)

Angie and Evelin's story reveal how race, class, and gender highlighted the alternate experience of learning from an early age how to care for yourself and watch after family. For Evelin, this clashed with the state's intervention on immigrant, families of color in particular for what they deemed neglectful parenting. For some children of domestic workers, this contradicted what they saw in employer's homes. But even at employer's homes, children of domestic workers still met hostility in the form of surveillance of their bodies both inside the home and in the surrounding community. Similar to Vivian's story, a dominant recurring theme that runs across many of them is the experience of policing and racial profiling, instances of them being stopped or managed when entering employers' "private" life:

> There was this one house, they didn't let my mom bring me into the house, so I was forced to wait for her outside in the car. I was not allowed in the house unless I was cleaning. My brother had a different experience though, he was allowed to stay home, even though he was constantly crying for my mom. There was also another incident where neighbors called the police on my mother and I, because they saw us entering the employer's home without them being present. (Sarah)

> I remember one time my mom, she told me this story, she was leaving the house after she was done working and she was getting someone's recycle, you know what I mean? I don't know if she thought "oh these people don't recycle" or they just haven't recycled this for money like a lot of Latinos do...so she took their

> recycle and a man was like "you fucking Mexican!" and he was all like talking shit to her, a person from that neighborhood, and I remember thinking like dude, she's not even Mexican. (Evelin)

Sarah's experience was a clear example of how her body was disciplined to be made 'useful' in order to be allowed to enter the employer's house. This process that implicated children of domestic workers functioned as a training ground where they are slowly introduced to the practice of domesticity, reminding me of what Paul Willis describes as the process of "learning to labor" (1981). This disciplinary measure was also given form in the act of play, as many of them described similar experiences of not being allowed to be with or help their mothers clean, and were forced to play with employers' children or be in a contained space:

> My mom would make me play with them, even if I didn't want to, yeah, I didn't want to. Most of the time I just wanted to sit there and help her dust so we can leave early (in my eyes), but she would always just redo it again [laughter]. "Oh no, ve a jugar/ Oh no, go play"...[laughter]. Anyways so then she had this one boss whose daughter was actually a year younger than me, and this little girl [my mom actually still works for the same family], this little girl would make me play with her and I hated playing with her because she was so bossy and she would make me do stuff for her, I was practically like her slave for the day I felt, like as a kid, like I would hate going there when she would take me. Like we would play barbies but then she would make, like, decide what my barbie needs to do, like "Oh you can be like my driver" you know what I mean? Like shit like that. And you know like when you would make your barbies talk? I never really said anything because she would decide what my barbies would say. That kind of shit. I hated playing with her. But it was kinda like I knew that she was "the boss" so I never fought with her. And my mom would say, "Ve a jugar con Sara/Go play with Sara" and I would try to leave and go and help her, "Oh no I'm gonna go help my mom I'll be back" and then "No, ve a jugar con Sara/No, go play with Sara"...it would make me mad. It just felt weird, like I felt like I'm here to work...so just that interaction never felt natural, you're not really my friend. I think at like maybe at 15 I was just literally there to help with the cleaning. (Gabriela)

> She did want me to play with her son....I did not want to play with her son! I did not! Because I was in middle school and he wanted to play ball...and I was like "I don't think you should play ball because you have a lot of glass in your home and

> if it breaks, my mom's gonna get blamed!" and he was like "No she's not!" and I was like "I'm not gonna play with you!" and the mom saw that I didn't want to play with him and she got mad at me! And I was like "well if he hits that, I'm gonna get in trouble and my mom is!"....and then when she asked me "Why aren't you in school?" I had mentioned to her that I got suspended for something and all of a sudden the dynamic of the house changed, I became ostracized, she didn't want me near her son, when we were at the dinner table she didn't want to talk to me, umm and then when I tried to say bye to her she's like "ok bye!" and she would shut the door in front of me! So I noticed that I wasn't a "fit" child to her I guess you can say? All of a sudden, I became this delinquent, this criminal...and honestly until this day she still doesn't talk to me. (Rosa)
>
> Marcy wouldn't allow me to help my mom clean. I was always placed in front of a TV and it felt awkward for me because I was in this huge living room with bear carpeting or jaguar carpeting and just....just so much antiques around me that I didn't even want to watch TV! I just want to get the hell out of here, help my mom clean and get out! [laughs]...And then when my mom would pass by you know, with the vacuum or with the broom, I'd feel guilty for not being able to help my mom. I was like "do you need help?" she's like "no because Marcy told you to sit there so just sit there" and I was like "I don't' want to sit here though!" but I would have to, and when Marcy noticed that I wasn't even watching the TV she'd tell me "do you want to read instead?" Sometimes she would ask me if I wanted to go into her glass room, and I was like "you have a glass room? for what?" and she went and I went, [chuckles] and she showed me like for example, I think she had Katana swords and like Japanese portraits and stuff like that, so very, very fancy pieces of art and she started giving me a tour of her house and like all of a sudden I just got into a museum, wow! you know? It just turned into a museum! Just looking at it in that context, and I would see my mom, I was like wow, so I'm in a museum and my mom's the janitor! (Anonymous)

Play was forced and an act that figured them as their servants, being socialized to be seen as their property, their accomplice to the staging of their worlds and everyday lives. Without their presence there to praise and validate them, their worlds were insignificant. The story of the barbies became a performance that reinforced privilege and set the stage for whiteness, where racialized servitude was established and roles put in place that set who has the right to speak, and when, what, and how others speak. This required taking away her voice and speaking on behalf of her while she served her needs. In the case of Rosa, playing with the employer's children meant becoming the nanny herself, making

sure that they did not make a mess so that it would not add to her mother's workload and stress. This role came at a price, when she was treated as suspect by the employer when she was suspended from school. "I wish she would understand things that were happening in middle school that were very hard on me. I wasn't really seeking approval from her, but I've never felt discriminated like that before. It did affect me in so many ways" (personal communication, 2016). However, some did describe not necessarily disliking playing with employer's children. This was only the case when they were allowed to help their mothers with the work of attending the employer's children. They shared tender moments in-between tasks where they gained access to amenities. This was seen in Maria and Denise's narrative, where they described sharing bonding moments with their parents in employers' homes:

> I remember one time, it was like a 3-bedroom house, it was just beautiful…and my mom was like if you behave, and you let me clean and finish early we can get in the jacuzzi…I must have been older there, probably 12 or 13, and yeah you know, I just kept quiet, didn't bother, and my mom and I got to go into the jacuzzi, and I was impressed that my mom knew how to operate it. (Maria)

> Llegábamos y el se iba a trabajar, y ya yo sabia a donde me tenia que ir yo, arriba a donde esta el, donde tienen un sótano verdad? Pero un sótano con una tele, un monkey, hasta las cosas de los niños nos tenían allí, y yo hacia allí mis tareas...abecés me decía mi papa "termina...." y allí después me ponía hablar con el.[40] (Denise)

Many of the children talked about their mothers and father working for the same family for more than twenty, thirty years. As a result, their memories transition from recalling moments of play, to gradually negotiating employers' expectations that were much more

[40] English translation: "We would arrive and he would go to work, and I would know where I had to go, upstairs where they had an attic. But the attic had a television, a plush monkey, toys, and it was there where I would do my homework…sometimes my dad would say "finish…" and then I would have conversations with him."

explicit. Several of them discussed always being compared to employer's children, and employers always feeling entitled to know and say something about their life. "They are so judgmental of what I do for school and work, and how much money I make. They always feel entitled to say something about what I do, perhaps because they've known me since I was a child. To them, they come from a lot of money, so all their choices are based around what is going to provide them more money" (personal communication, 2016). This was also another site where variation in experience was seen, where on one hand Angie was seeking to be understood so as to avoid being criminalized, whereas Gabriela did not want to share anything with employers due to their constant judgments and expectations of what they deemed a successful life.[41] Denise's experience depicted an occasion where even within a contained space, her and her father were able to slow down the hurried pace of domestic work and share conversations about life and his childhood. No se mi papa, desde que era muy joven, le toco duro de la edad de niño, siempre trabajar

[41] This was very much gendered, as many of them were young women whose brothers had very different experiences. Angie stated: For my brothers, she is just a worker, but I go and see and understand things differently. I've noticed that she does sugar coat a few things "Oh I mopped" she doesn't say "Oh, I mopped three floors" or "Oh, I just polish silver" but she doesn't say "I have to polish a whole three rooms of silver in this mansion!" or she says "I have to deal with cats" but she doesn't tell them that sometimes she's forced to babysit those cats for no reason! So it's just, they don't understand and because they've never been through it, they've never seen it with their own eyes, but I'm sure if they would have experienced it, they would probably be as critical as me to some of the things said and some of the things that they have her do" (2016). There is another dimension to this perhaps, the feeling that they could have been in the place of their mothers cleaning homes had it not been for their mothers' "sacrifices." Many interviewees also expressed brothers who went to the employer's homes with their mothers were invited by male figures to learn about stocks, were taught and even encouraged to learn skills, and were even offered allowances. They were allowed slightly more flexibility and were seen as more capable of performing white middle-class activities which increased their chances of escaping servitude, to an extent because race also determined the terms of inclusion as well.

trabajar trabajar vino a este país—a trabajar trabajar trabajar. Y haci va a seguir la cadena, pero son cosas que, si me pongo sentimental, creo de la admiración" (personal communication, 2016).[42]

The concept of being 'part of the family,' through the perspective of the children, was problematized through the queering of vigilance, which was transformed into attention and care. Traces of remembered, experiences of those who interacted with the ephemeral materiality of domestic work reflected an embodied process that that is shaped by simultaneous spatial interventions and resistance, routines and desires that can shape each other's condition of possibility. Children of domestic workers understood the exploitative relations of their mother's labor, and by gesturing toward a slowing down of these moments and their memories, they transformed the bonds that divided oppression from resistance to one of collaborators in demanding alternate ways of acknowledging labor. This meant following the traces, glimmers, and residues of their labor as they became situated in memories and reclaiming its compromised potentiality from practices of power. They understood that this came at a risk of being trapped into contained spaces where roles and lines of recognition were not to be disturbed. Despite the imposed boundaries fixed in between employer and worker, between home and workplace, between home and homeland, and even between work and play, the forces from each side reflect their interconnectedness through this fixed pivot point, where transformation from one state to the next depends on collaboration and play. Similar to a seesaw, this repeated

[42] English translation: "I don't know, my dad, since he was very young, he had a tough childhood., always working working working he came to this country—to work work work. And like that the cycle continues but there are things that do make me sentimental, I think because of the admiration (for his work)."

movement from one position, situation, or condition to another has its thresholds and is predetermined by power and its limits. As they narrate their relationships with their mother's employers and their children, children of domestic workers dispute the rigid boundaries of family units. They reconfigure them as porous, dynamic, and ephemeral cultural institutions. In play, they simultaneously become positioned into a figure that is to be shaped, while quickly dispositioning themselves from such containment.

3

Conversations with children of domestic workers has helped expose the tensions that highlight how our experiences with our mothers shaped the way we perceive our larger community. For example, when sharing our similar memories we began with an anger that was oftentimes directed at employers or the children of employers, and the difficulty of changing the working conditions for our mothers. We talked about how our mothers both stressed the importance of continuing our education, as it is according to them the only *herencia* (inheritance) that they will be able to give us. In her book *The Maid's Daughter,* Mary Romero brilliantly captures the "exchange of inequities" that children of workers usually experience, and offers critical reflective points that reveals how Olivia (the central character of her book) at first recounted those painful memories with anger, but slowly changed perspective as a result of allowing multiple meanings to take place (2011, p.15). The focus on pain is not to privilege the traumatic dimension of these embodied narratives. Placing a story in multiple contexts can allow for different interpretations that can transform the ways current and future generations remember the domestic worker experience they shared with their mothers. The anger that often

characterizes how the children of domestic workers are usually perceived seems to reflect the pain, an expression of frustration at the difficulty of explaining the experiences with our mothers and how their labor shaped their bodies in a way that left lasting effects on many of them. This is an experience I share with them as a daughter of a domestic worker as well, a frustration that also points to the difficult task of protecting the legacy of our mother's work, without reducing it to one memory and one site.

One persistent pattern in the ways adult children continued to process their mother's work was by acknowledging the fluidity of their labor and the strategic ways they made a living to support their families. Everyone interviewed discussed how domestic work was only one of many other jobs their mothers undertook. Mothers engaged in other forms of service work, and it was through their interactions in these other spaces that they were able to acquire a certain amount of flexibility to reclaim more time and protect their bodies from physically tasking labor:

> It was always random different jobs so like I can't just say she did this or just did one thing because she, she does like several things, like in one you know what I mean? Packaging food for airlines at the airport, cleaning fast food restaurants overnight, and working for private catering and event services. Umm...it's very like, people devalue the type of work my mom does. After a certain amount of time your body aches doing that stuff and I can tell with my mom laying down I can tell like her body is just aching, you know what I mean? (Evelin)

> My mother quit cleaning homes because they gradually kept asking for more of her time. She began taking care of children in her home, then selling food at our apartment complex, then selling at the park where she would play soccer with me. (Leslie)

> My mom not only cleaned individual houses, but she also worked at the Residence Inn in Menlo Park, she worked there for a good 10 years. She started there, like she says "de muchacha/ as a young lady" and she was very energetic, she said that each hotel room, she would clean with a lot of integrity, con muchas ganas (with a lot of effort), till she realized that she was killing herself. I remember she would tell me that she would see other women clean the hotel

> rooms, and she would see that they would half-ass it, and they would get away with it, and she started to learn tricks from them! You know the people don't really use the bathroom, then you know give it a quick rinse, then to go completely through the whole thing as they would tell you to do. She had to learn how to strategically survive…As she started to get older, her back and knees started hurting. She said that eventually she was able to get enough references to get individual houses to clean, and eventually she left hotel work, because it was too grueling. (Maria)

It was interesting to note than in remembering their mother's work as encompassing a multitude of other jobs, they emphasized how they each informed their way of thinking about how to perform their labor differently. Evelin expressed the difficulty to define her mom's job because of how many she undertook to make ends meet for her family, and how they physically exhausted her body. This also had to do with the ways her many jobs in the service sector were devalued and exploitative. Her mother's body was able to express that without words, in the manner that she carried herself during her few hours of rest at night. On the other hand, Leslie recalled how her mother made the decision to work from her own home, taking on multiple jobs from being a nanny, a food vendor, and housewife. By leaving the highly exploitative conditions of domestic work, she was able to make time to work at her home with her children and enjoy moments of play at her local community park while she sold homemade tamales and pupusas. In her interview, she recalls a childhood with children always at her home. Maria's story of her mother doing both domestic work and hotel work revealed a powerful enactment of resistance, where she learned from other workers how to better protect herself from the arduous demands of domesticity. Adan, whose mother also alternates between hotel and domestic work, describes a similar moment his mother shared about what her first actions are when first stepping into a room she is about to clean, stating "she takes a few seconds

to assess the room, and devise a quick strategy for cleaning it that is the least taxing on her body" (personal communication, 2015). Remembering feeling young and energetic to realizing very quickly that she was killing herself resonates with workers' own feelings about the many sacrifices their body takes and how difficult it is to imagine their bodies without feeling exhausted or in pain. They support the position that Evelyn Nakano Glenn made when she researched three generations of Japanese families in domestic service: "women suffered wounds to their self-esteem from *being* domestic workers. If we switch the focus to *doing* domestic work, we find somewhat different responses" (1986, p. 183) More than just engendering a structure of feelings for understanding the complexity of domestic work, adult children of domestic workers continue to navigate the unraveling forces that blur who a domestic worker is, the sites that enforce such labor, and how it becomes embodied. However, they create plans that buffer out the debilitating aspects of their work, which children remember as valuable tools for liberation.

Domestic work was not something that was new to many of the mothers. Their nomadic memories of their own childhoods in their country of origin interacted with different perceptions around domesticity. Leslie's mother's story comes to mind, as she described the unapologetic personality her mother had in El Salvador growing up, where she left prior to the civil war and in Los Angeles as she remembered her growing up:

> My mom lived in el campo, my grandparents had their own chickens and cows, their corn, that's how they made their living, farming. And so my mom grew up in the farm, she was a cowgirl! literally! She'd wear her cowboy hat, her flannel shirts and her jeans and her boots and she'd always be out in the field herding the cows, helping my grandfather with milking the cows, and that was her lifestyle, that farming lifestyle. And it wasn't easy, obviously. I think my mom wanted to leave because she just needed to leave the hostile machista environment in her family. She would take the bus sometimes, she said that when she started working in Malibu, it would take her 4 buses from LA, from Alvarado and Temple. 4

> buses to go clean houses in Malibu, and she said that in the first couple of years that she was here, that she didn't care, she still had her cowboy hat on, she looked like a man! With her boots, but she liked it! She felt comfortable like that. She felt like I don't care, this is me this is who I am! So I guess, domestic work I guess was imprinted in her, I mean that's how she grew up always having the house clean without dirt, taking care of her other siblings, and helping her parents out at home. That's domestic work in a way, so I never thought about it, I guess ever since she was a child she was always doing that work and learning new things…

The memories of her mother's childhood working in the farm overlapping with her mother walking in the streets of Los Angeles with her cowboy hat taking multiple buses to clean houses was an affective memory that eluded the polarity between here and there, and blended into each other. Her learned skills from living a rural lifestyle similarly became her tools for survival in the city where she used them to create a living. On a similar note, Maria speaks to the affective bonds her mother has created with her employers. In this passage, she speaks fondly of the relationships her mother has built through time, which have influenced her own processing of her mother's labor:

> I'm really proud of my mom…I am proud that she is the one that takes initiative, she's an extrovert, she's a social butterfly, she's not afraid to pick up the phone and make calls….she's something else, that Sylvia…..The other day I was talking to her and asking her how work is doing. She brags about my brother and I; they know her life story, my mom shares it all. She has people where you know, 8 years cleaning their houses, she likes to talk to them, they let her practice her English, and I think it's pretty cool, that through my mom, I get to hear about these people, she tells me about their lives, and….she tells them about me. Yeah, they're her family, they're people she's built a relationship with. For her birthday or holidays, they give her bonuses. To me what that shows is not so much the manual work of cleaning, but also the ability for my mom to build relationships. For her to share about her family with these people, I think its special. She said, "I'm proud of what I do, I like the relationships that I've built." I think that really was the change for me, seeing how proud she was in her work, and the possibilities it gave us as a family to survive, to have food on the table, that I also became to not be ashamed of it…because I was ashamed when I was younger. (Maria)

The fluidity of their narratives through time formed recognizable patterns of transformation both of how they perceived their mother's labor, and how those perceptions changed from when they were children to adults today. Without submitting to progressive, developmentalist ideas around childhood as a stage that is uncivilized and something to be left behind, adult children of domestic workers reflected on the less apparent actions that carried profound impacts on their mother's labor and their lives as well. This also had a lot to do with their parent's childhood as well, and their transformative experiences as a result of migration. Childhood memories moved with glimmers of uncertainty while accentuating transactions of power and resistance. Gabriela noted during her interview, As a kid you don't realize it, as a teenager you have anger issues, and then as you get older you understand their reasons, and for the most part she did it all, her main focus was always me. I saw that her job is just completely differently....because it's not because you like doing this, it's because you felt like you had to, for whatever reason. So yeah...so like the idea of her working so hard sometimes, it's really...like when does it stop? (personal communication, 2016).

4

Another luminous point of connection are the momentous ways the adult children of domestic workers imagine their shared future with their mothers. In her book *An Archive of Feelings*, author Ann Cvetkovich examines trauma and the affective experiences that function as an archive of its memory, embedded not just in narrative but in recorded videos and material artifacts from photographs to objects whose relation to trauma might seem arbitrary but is invested with sentimental value (2003, p. 7-8). The "archive of feelings" specific to daughters' varied as forms of love, rage, intimacy, grief, shame

similarly align to speak to the speculative dimensions of domestic work and its memory. They establish the conceptual coordinates for considering domestic work and the pain that manifests differently, as it comes into being within restricted parameters:

> I have a video when I left to Mexico in the summer, I told my mom, "I need to make at least a 1-minute clip, what do you want to tell your family members?" it was just on the spot! And my mom, in the clip, she talks about how she wants to come back home because a lot of family members of hers have died and she remembers many of them telling her "No te vayas para ya, what are you gonna go for? Are you gonna be a worker all your life?" But my mom she needed to help out, so I think that if she goes back, obviously people that she wished she would have seen, they're gone already, so....that's painful. I know that she said that the minute she gets there, she's gonna hug her sister because her sister, she's dying soon, so...that's one thing she wants to do, hug her sister and just hold her because the last time she saw all her sisters was when they were teenagers. I did show it in Mexico, many of them cried, and then when they said their goodbyes on video, I remember playing it here to my mom and my mom cried because one of the interviews that I did was of her tia and she's like "I don't even remember your face anymore mija, it's been years!"--that really hurt my mom! Not even my tia remembers how I look like. And when I showed her the video of my mom, she just started crying because she was like "I don't remember her face, I don't remember her like this!"...so they have a certain image of my mom when she was young, and it's hard for them to break away from that. It's hard for them to realize that she aged. (Angie)

Angie's video recordings between her mother and her mother's family in Mexico that she has not seen in more than twenty years was a powerful example of her mediating between simultaneous memories emanating across space and time, in addition to the condition of their present lives and the impossibility of reunification because borders. At once powerful and powerless, Angie mentions how increasingly urgent these videos felt for her and her mother, especially after Trump's election and the possibility of her mother's residency not being adjusted and prolonging her return. It is possible that for her, it was important relaying her mother's story in her mother's own words, but also having them see the ways her work has transformed her body through time. The painful realization that she has become a worker her whole life, which is what her family warned her not to

become, was made visible as they contrasted their memories of her youth with her aged body. This is emblematic of the immigrant experience where families divided by borders are dependent on each other's imaginaries running on differing versions of time. The accelerated speed of domestic work as it is seen in Angie's previous account of her mother's daily work routine coupled with the lapsed duration of her family not seeing her in over twenty years formed what Seigworth and Gregg call an undulation within the mixed capacities of the in-between—expansions and contractions of affectability that arrive almost simultaneously and form a relation that comes to mark overlapping passages of time as they are arranged by bodies and worlds (2010, p. 13). This threaded accumulation of shimmers made possible by her mother's labor was technologically indexed by Angie, as she was reluctant to dismiss her mother's body as neither aged and overworked or capacity-laden for disposability. Instead she held on to the affirmative power of her labor, mobilizing our understandings of her mother's routines as a speculative opening towards what could be, collapsing time and reorienting us from progressive time. The shuffling of memories across borders dispositioned her family's collective pain as a result of prolonged separation from being domesticated by nations, unitary family units, and individuals alike. It is also indicative of the uneven distribution of power and opportunities under the capitalist economy functioning under late neoliberalism today, which seeks to restore conservative political structures, and reinforce privatization and national sovereignty at the expense of social rights and democracy itself.

Similar to the video, Denise talks about a photograph that holds so much sentimental value to her, one taken by her father's employer at her beachfront home. Her

interpretation of the photograph also speaks to a speculative opening of what is to come, one her father enacted with nothing but the knowledge and ardent dedication he embodied from his childhood and intensified by his migration journey:

> Una vez su patrona no me acuerdo quien, le tomaron una foto a mi papa, so el estaba pensativo haci, y salió tan bella! A mi papa me gusta verlo distraído porque cuando siente que todo la atención esta a el, el no es el. Esta muy bonita. Me gusta como agarraron a mi papa haci, desprevenido. Porque esta en la playa y esta mirando allí, y esta mirando como el horizonte, sus sueños, sus aleno, lo que algún día forjo cuando mi papa era joven emigrando aquí en el país, y esta mirando como...ay no, hasta donde ah llegado! Soy una basurita digamos en este planeta tan grande, pero yo eh hecho tantas cosas, porque todos somos minúsculos en este país. Son cosas que yo admiro de mi papa. Simplemente, yo creo que lloro de afirmación.[43] (Denise)

Denise was overcome with emotion as she reflected on the inspiring dedication of her father's labor, of him always learning new skills on his own along the way with the little he has, to make a living. Her moving statement "I believe I cry, simply of affirmation" in response to her father's temporary gaze into the unknown and possible reflection of his journey into the future is a relentless call for becoming imperceptible, of speaking the unspoken and its inability to being captured, completely. Becoming resonates with reading more multiplicity, which is constitutive of pain's desire to transform.

The pause captured in Denise's photograph of her father at his site of work is a rare glimpse into the resting moments that children of domestic workers consider sacred.

[43] English translation: "One time his employer, I don't remember who, took a photo of my father…he looked very pensive, and it came out so beautiful! I like seeing my father distracted because when he feels that he has all the attention, he is not himself. It is very beautiful. I like how they caught him off guard. Because he is at the beach and is watching, he is watching the horizon, his dreams, what he one day forged when he was young migrating here to this country, and he is watching how…well, how far he's come! I am this little speck, you can say, in this planet so large, but I have accomplished so many things, because we are all miniscule in this country. These are things that I admire of my father. I believe I cry, simply of affirmation."

The theme of rest was symbolically present in many of the interviews and one that projected a possibility for inhabiting a future without work. These resting moments that children of domestic workers remember of their mothers and fathers become neatly folded memories that gather in everyday ritual, in the form of an altar. Organized around the tropes of resistance and affirmation, altars are important forms of memory-making and history-making for the Mexican, immigrant community. According to Hooks and Mesa-Bains, altars serve as sites for cultural reclamation oftentimes centered around an important figure/s in one's life, where temporary and ephemeral offerings are layered, and ongoing offerings are required (Hooks and Mesa-Bains 2017).

In this passage, Maria beautifully weaves in and out between multiple layers of shimmering affects, functioning as persistent proof of a collective body's ongoing immersion in the worlds created by her mother's labor:

> I think before I would be mad at my mom because she couldn't help me with my math homework, she couldn't help me with my essays, but that's how I realized, that's how my mom contributed. That's what she could control, she could always provide a very clean household, you know? I don't think I valued it because of the shame, because I didn't have someone to help me with my homework, but now what I would want to be remembered from my mom is her strength and dedication to her family, and that she gave my brother and I a very…not stable…she gave us the best that she could and it was…it was manifested through domestic work, inside and out…because that's what she told me all the time, "as a woman you have to be ready to always work hard, a woman's work never ends…" my mom would say. It's beautiful strength that they have, not only physical but, I don't know if it makes sense, but through the dedication you know, that you love someone so much, that you have such respect for your work, that you want to do a good job…and you want to clean the table the best you can, for it to smell like bleach…. And now I'm beginning to see it, she wants the best! Those are the tools, and the talent and the gift that she's been able to shape and perfect, you know? And then the other one would be through her relationships. I'm so happy that's she's made so many friends, that are racially and class different, but my mom doesn't care. Her compassion, her humor…transgresses those boundaries. She connects! I think that's something that needs to be more visible, the humble

> human spirit of my mom, and how it lives through the relationships that she's built, that these people really love her. (Maria)

Here, she speaks to the im(possibility) of having her mother rest, and how it taps into a transgenerational memory saturated in the body, in the connective tissue that functions as buffer and support between generations, between forces of power and resistance, expectation and desire:

> My mom, she tells me, "ya estoy cansada, ya estoy cansada…" Pretty soon she's gonna need surgery on both her knees, because her joints and her cartilage are gone. It's kind of interesting because that's the same surgery my grandfather had, my abuelito was a bracero, a cook, a fieldworker, he worked so much…So my mom is gonna need the same surgery her father had, in both knees…what scares my mom is not the surgery, it's that they're telling her that's she's gonna have to take some time off, she's gonna have to be in bed, and that's freaking her out! She can't stop! But I would really want my mom to rest…what she says is that she's been wanting to go back to school. When she lived in el rancho she only went up to 4th grade, and my grandma made her take care of her younger siblings, and my mom had to do the chores. She's always been hungry for an education. I tell her to go, but she says it's not possible for somebody like her. (Maria)

Maria reflecting on the process of how she felt about her mother as a child and slowly coming to a resting [I feel the word resting gives a sense of stop while I am not sure this is what you want to convey]. point of how she feels about her labor today revealed the accentuating and dimming aspects of domestic work. She laid down raw feelings of rage and shame she felt as a child, rage and shame for her mother as she was unable to help her with homework, and anger and shame for being unable to value her work in the way that she did later in life. This brings tremendous guilt that was vividly felt in other interviews, a frustration for not having the language available to be able to articulate the complexity of the shared experience. Yet, she remembered the way her mother's body expressed and navigated peculiar situations, memories which she nurtured and later reconnected with to appreciate the transgressive power of her mother's work, and the

worlds she made possible for her family and employers' families as well. Manifesting the best that she could through providing a clean house created the opportunity for those around her to rest, at the expense of her labor, her body, and her time. Maria adamantly validates this and seeks to protect her mother's dignity by encouraging a state of rest for her, but this clashes with her mother's experience of women's work never ending, hence the inability to stop. Like Maria states, it is also something her mother is able to control, a set of skills she has honed which reflect a hard work ethic passed on through generations in her family. These memories settled in an intermediary space, much like an altar, where her community continued to layer their stories through video, photographs, and embodied memory—a hybrid space that transcends families, borders and generations.

But these memories are complex, and many of the perspectives adult children carry today as they reflect on their mother's labor continue to be mixed, unresolved feelings about how they envision their mothers' futures. Similar to Maria's story, rest became something all adult children desired for their mothers, speaking of the difficulty of getting their mothers to slow down, or at minimum demand better working conditions from their employers. This sequence of thoughts depicts the difficulty of engaging in rights, according to the adult children and the discussions they had with their mothers:

> How do people exercise their rights when they don't have papers, and they are afraid? Giving people the power that they can do other things, that you have other options, is really important. But how do you teach people those things, when you're just kind of afraid? You have to find a way to have these discussions with them. (Gabriela)

Gabriela points to a real concern of fear that domestic workers have of employers due to the amount of power they have as a barrier to practicing their rights. Knowing about their rights might help protect them from work injuries and being overworked. Having a

contract might help outline the terms of the job, but it's not always so straight forward. Many employers have a lot of power, influence, and money that they will use against the workers. For example, Angie talked about her and her mom discussing the DWBR. Her mom was happy but at the same time she knew it wouldn't help her situation, that things with her employers would not change, like getting her 15-minute break on Fridays:

> She doesn't really expect much to change in her life. She said "well hopefully it does help others, but I'm pretty sure it won't help people in my situation. Having enforcement would help; but also, employers are very powerful, they are lawyers themselves; exercising rights would immediately change the way they act around her. (Angie)

Similarly, Gabriela spoke of her mother's refusal to exercise rights due to her experience of the civil war in El Salvador:

> My mother has a fear of exercising rights because of her experience of the civil war in El Salvador. She always associates rights and marches to the guerrilla, and getting into trouble, and getting killed. Even if she believes in the cause she will not go. She will not make herself a part of it because that's what she was running away from all along. (Gabriela)

Maria's account of her mother not engaging in domestic worker rights was due to both her and her mother being unaware of the DWBR, but also as a result of her mother's own involvement with organizing at her church, where they fought against other issues that impacted their predominantly immigrant community:

> My mom hasn't heard about the DWBR, and neither have I. My mom knows of inequalities, but she's never framed it through the social movement process. My mom is a devout Catholic, for good and for worse, she is very involved, teaches catechism, does volunteer work, she's involved in environmental issues, she took me to a protest against a garbage dump they wanted to bring to her community, she became aware through her church. It's really cool because she lives in a mostly immigrant community, and through her church, and through her, I become involved as well, and become aware of issues. That's the spirit of my mom, she does things for other people, she is ready to fight, but not really under her cause…" (Maria)

Maria's mother placing the needs of her family and community and fighting for other causes that were not her own was a common theme present in many of the children's interviews. They described their mother's relentless passion to be in service to family, community, employers, leaving them to place their own hardships aside in order to help others. Despite the challenges, children continued talking about the future, strategizing ideas to help inform workers of their rights, but also thinking about long-term plans:

> How do you plan for the future in that sector? Teaching workers financial independence, informing them about retirement, health insurance. Having them reflect on things like, "Ok, I'm gonna overwork myself, but how long can I do this for? Can my body take this? Where am I gonna be when I'm out of this job?" Also, I'll be taking care of my mom, but what about workers who don't have children? (Gabriela)

Having just graduated with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Gabriela was very much concerned about the financial future of her mother who was quickly reaching retirement. She raised urgent concerns that she was already confronting with her mother who despite nearing retirement, was unwilling to stop working. Despite her body no longer being capable of performing the arduous labor that she was still being succumbed to as a domestic worker, her mother expressed no interest in planning for a future for herself once she is unable to work. These economic concerns are intimately tied to the precarity of the occupation and begs the question of whether the DWBR can be a first step towards addressing economic justice and how it intersects with domestic worker's long-term wellbeing. Gabriela, in presenting these important questions, did not hesitate to answer them herself by stating "I'll be taking care of my mom," a remark that all children immediately shared… "but what about workers who don't have children?"

On Brown Luminosity

Vivian's story at the beginning of the chapter provided us with a glimpse of her experience living in two places at once, navigating multiple worlds and being spoken for by her mother's employer. Although the employer sought to prioritize her and her mother's well-being by fighting racial discrimination and separation, it begged the question of whether this fight would have been possible if Vivian's mother was not a live-in domestic worker in their home. It resonates with earlier thoughts of domestic workers stating the inability of the white imaginary to ever see or be comfortable with seeing people of color as free or liberated. Vivian's mother's stance was made very clear in this fragment of a statement her employer read at a public hearing: "When I am walking around in the city and driving around in my car I don't know if this happened only to me or to anyone else, but I really wish nobody else would go through this in the future" (Gafni 2014). The layering of policies and laws meant to protect immigrant families, children, and workers presents itself as a multidimensional threshold of what is possible under the law. While individuals may be granted access to spaces, provided temporary relief from deportation and given permission to work, or offered a set of rights they can use to defend themselves from exploitation, it puts them in a time bind where their lives are suspended and capacitated to only work, with the imminent threat of removal. Moving through the in-between spaces of laws, rights, migration, and labor, children offer valuable perspectives that are oftentimes overlooked, especially in the context of rights-based, social movements.

The constellation of shimmers charged with bearing witness to domestic work and its memory both past and present reorient us to inhabit alternate ways of understanding

the domestic worker experience, as it is absorbed by children through time. Their memories, which they carefully gathered and processed, were never possessed but rather continuously transformed through its ongoing interaction with people and spaces. This archive is not one that grows and solidifies but rather breaks into each other, contradicts itself, and disrupts any sense of self, family, and community. Memories of childhood get reassembled later in life, insisting as a force to be embodied and enabling a future together that requires encounters with others, a process of becoming that encourages cultural survival and transformation. It involves a reclamation that is "not only a strategy to make visible Chicana voices and histories but is also the struggle to develop a critical practice that can propel the brown body from a neocolonial past and into the embodiments of radical subjectivities" (Cruz 2001, p.658). As revealed in their mixed feelings about how to improve working conditions for their mothers so that they can make more time for themselves, they confront the difficulties of getting their labor valued, but also getting their mothers to be more confident and value themselves as well. The differing modes of remembering and processing the uncertain, unresolved memories they carry of their mother's labor magically and simultaneously align to create luminous points, developing a brown luminosity that travels through oppositional intersections. Hard to diminish, this vision is also intimately entangled with mothers' visions for their family's future, one that daughters understand as implicating them in the role as archivist and caretaker. This gendered expectation of "you took care of me, so now I am going to take care of you" as it is normalized in Latino culture, implies becoming caretakers of memory, both of their family's history and mother's labor as it was shared and experienced. Although mothers might have a difficult time imagining a separation from

domestic work, a desired expectation of their children, they definitely mobilize the hopes and desires they dream all their hard work would mean at the end. “My mother, she sees me as her wings—she can’t imagine herself escaping the restrictive aspects of domestic work, but maybe, perhaps maybe, once I leave towards the possibilities she has opened up for me, she’ll realize that they are possible, and that they are hers too.” It becomes then a matter of accounting for their labor’s shimmer—the stretching of a process underway.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION: WHEN THE FUTURE COMES

"When the Future Comes"

In her article "When the Future Comes," Beatriz Cortez speaks to the super power of immigrants, where she describes the simultaneity of being in two places at once as "our imaginary, our temporality, our vision, and our landscape" (2017). She talks about the daily reality faced by immigrants, both Salvadoran and Mexican who comprise the largest group of Latinos in the City of Los Angeles and come from Latin American countries with a long history of racism, conquest, decimation of indigenous populations, slavery, and more recent migrations. As a result, migrants continue to resist the remnants of this colonial history as well as racist policies and behaviors here in the U.S., questioning concepts that once defined them in their previous home. This history is evoked when she engages in an untimely conversation with a photograph titled *Edita (la del plumero), Panamá, 1977 / Edita (the one with the feather duster), Panamá, 1977* (Figure 8) by artist Sandra Eleta. Part of a series titled "Servitude," Cortez draws a parallel between U.S. occupation and service labor in Panama, and immigrant labor in the affluent neighborhoods of Los Angeles. She describes the photograph in the following way, which she sees mounted on a museum wall:

> Edita sits on an elegant chair, and I imagine a future where she will no longer occupy these spaces only to clean them, just as I imagine a future when immigrants who clean and beautify the spaces of Los Angeles will also get to own them. I look at this photograph, and I imagine Edita in a future far from that moment—the rightful owner of a similar chair, her make up still fashionable, her clothes transformed. When the future comes, immigrants in Los Angeles will have full access to education and health care, and will no longer be forced to work

> as gardeners, domestic workers, or day laborers. When the future comes, we will have our dignity intact. I know it because I can see it in the pose, in the beauty, and in the way Edita looks at me from the gallery wall.

This is how the adult children similarly imagine the future for their mothers, who work cleaning these affluent homes in Los Angeles. Although personal, this shared desire reflects a dream to end exploitation for all in the transformation of subservient roles to rightful owners of the spaces they clean, in the transformation of their tools from oppression to liberation, where its use is one of playfulness and ornamentation to her empowering pose. "I want her to be able to return to Mexico and visit her family she has not seen in over twenty years, and hopefully have the opportunity to buy her a house in the future, where she can grow her own garden," Angie said. Denise reiterates what her father and mother both express to her regarding their plans after work: "El siempre habla de que el día que se retire que se va ir de regreso a El Salvador con sus animales, cosa que mi mama también abecés habla lo mismo, regresar a tierra, poner los pies sobre la mesa…" (2016).[44] Others spoke to their mother's reluctance to return to their countries of origin, where they prefer to stay with their daughters instead. Sarah stated, "Home for my mom is wherever I am—she does not want to return to Honduras even though she has a house there…I would like for her to gain confidence to go to school, something she has always wanted to do" (2016). Gabriela also spoke about the future to come, one that her mother also plans together with her, yet she has conflicting feelings about. She explained that her mother refuses to return to El Salvador despite having sent remittances to her

[44] English translation: "He always speaks about the day he retires, that he will return to El Salvador to his animals, something that my mother also mentions, return to their land, and place their feet over the table…"

family to buy land, and also refuses to stop working anytime soon. Pointing to a picture of her mother in her living room, she shared that her mother had left all her belongings at her apartment after deciding to move with her employer of over twenty-five years to work as a live-in domestic worker out of state. “My mom left me these pictures taken of her at her employer’s home. It’s like the roles switched, and instead I am the one waiting for her return” (2016). The photograph tucked in between books on a shelf is of her mother resting on a hammock by a pool, looking at the camera with a huge smile. I couldn’t help but smile myself and think of Edita’s photograph. This was her, already in the future, her body stretched and suspended between two points, moving side to side but never arriving at one site completely.

Figure 8: Edita (la del plumero), Panamá / Edita (the one with the feather duster), Panamá, 1977 By Sandra Eleta.

Source: Hammer Museum

Summary of Findings

This dissertation centered the embodied experiences of domestic workers and their children. I began by examining the movement for a DWBR in California, and how organizing efforts which expanded between Los Angeles and San Francisco continuously figured the body of the Latina domestic worker as vulnerable, exploited, and in pain in order to validate demands for worker and immigrant rights. Through archival research, I was able to trace this pattern in organizational survey material, where worker's voices resisted prefigured mappings of their bodies in pain, and where they laid out their own

demands for a movement. Between the Du Bois surveys and the houseworker surveys of Union WAGE, an insensible archive emerged that promoted epidemiological, reformist approaches to understanding domestic workers' conditions. I argue that this biological scripting generated an "absent presence" that failed to offer explicit theories on the body that challenged rationalism and colonial body/mind dualisms, which in return, further legitimized racialized, gendered bodies to be confined to servitude. When the composition of the work force slowly transformed, worker's demands were to take into account their diverse immigrant experiences from Latin America and their experiences as women of color in the U.S. as well, envisioning a multi-ethnic and leadership model for organizing that empowers them as workers but also as leaders to take the movement forward. This was at the center of the DWBR movement, and by focusing on one organization, Mujeres en Acción, I was able to analyze the ways in which immigrant activist networks established in the 1980s influenced the organizing model that workers retrofitted to shift the gaze from the worker's body as individual tragedy, to demonstrating the architecture of neoliberal globalization that benefits from the transnational embodied crises of migrant domestic workers. This process reflected the complexity of such organizational strategies, which worked to better understand both the hazards and impact of excessive workload characteristic of domestic work and be in a better position to demand protections that employers would have to comply with, mostly through the use of standardized contracts, rights, and enforcement. In crafting their vulnerability and in an effort to avoid being invisibilized, MEA organizers centered the bodies in their testimonies as they made their claims for rights, making their claims more than a call for protections but rather connecting their labor to the reproduction of

everyday life. They understood legislation as a strategy to open up opportunities for workers to see how structures function and come up with their own plans on how to begin to break those structures apart, and how to engage with policymaking in new ways. This was done while also acknowledging the ontological possibilities of the memories of ongoing displacement, migration, and refugee experiences that continue to mobilize their organizing space and worker imaginaries.

Domestic worker organizing created a space where workers can speculate about what their lives, their labor can mean in the future. They placed themselves as subjects of history capable of controlling their own representations, questioning identity categories that individualize and homogenize their histories, and put forth a proposal for engaging youth as active participants in the making and transformation of their transnational experiences. In Chapter 3, I explored the embodied experiences of domestic workers' children, and the embedded power relations uncovered in their memories as they narrate their childhood accompanying their mothers and father to work. Their memories provided an affective landscape of memory where the repetitive, and demeaning aspects of domestic work are pried apart from western, colonial arrangements of power. I argued that their collective embodied knowledge marks a reframing that goes beyond issues of legality and against dominant social scripts that subordinate transgenerational family trauma to ahistorical master narratives of domestic workers as assimilated or saved. I proposed interpreting these collective, embodied memories as a constellation of shimmers—luminous points that align to expose the relationships between workers, their children, employers, and their families, and the specific context in which they were produced. Their narratives reflected an uncertainty of the memories they held, as they

relied on painful stories that were passed down to them from family members. This uncertainty also came as a result of them wanting to recall detailed events, but instead being flooded with a wave of emotions that they thought didn't exist anymore. In other cases, the routinized way of narrating memory determined by the rhythms of their mothers' work schedule became an invitation to see their shared experience as more than just a tidy recollection of the past. It was a collapsed account of time dictated by the conditions of the occupation. Other themes revealed power dynamics within employers homes that dictated their terms of play as children, transforming play as an act for disciplining their bodies and revealing how race, class, and gender forced them to assume roles that contained and managed them to become workers in service to others. Without submitting to progressive, developmentalist ideas around childhood as a stage that is uncivilized and something to be left behind, adult children of domestic workers reflected on the less apparent actions that carried profound impacts on their mother's labor and their lives as well. These aligned forces that continue to shift through time became important sites for cultural reclamation, where temporary and ephemeral memories arrived at resting points where they were to be offered for ongoing transformation. Altogether, they created what I call a brown luminosity—the forces activated by their mothers' labor that created multiple worlds of possibilities for their children, forces that also activate memories which move beyond victimizing their mother's bodies to enable an ever-changing perspective of the ways their labor has radically transformed homes, livelihoods, and transnational spaces. The differing modes of remembering these memories are intimately entangled with their visions for a future where they will be able

to rest and be the rightful owners of the homes that they clean and plan to share with their families.

Future Research

There are several gaps in the research that will hopefully inspire future research. On the aspect of my research on adult children of domestic workers I focused primarily on the daughters of domestic workers, with the exception of a couple of interviews with sons. I find it hard to exchange in-depth conversation with the male-identified adult children. The couple of interviews I conducted with them began to reveal a reluctance to open up and reflect on painful memories, something I would consider researching further to elucidate the gendered complexities of how the domestic worker experience is interpreted and understood by male adult children of domestic workers and partners as well. As I mentioned in chapter two, sons were shown to not have much insight into their mother's work experience as much as their daughters due to their lack of engagement or interest in in the occupation, which can be attributed to several factors from not seeing domestic work as "real work," to their separation from it as a result of traditional gender roles continuously reinforced within much of Latino culture. Another site for further research is to continue bridging conversations with domestic worker organizers and their children who are younger in age (5-18 years) and actively participating in organizing work across various worker collectives.[45] This was a challenge to do because of age and IRB

[45] This dissertation did include several testimonies of children who participated in organizing, their testimonies made public by the speeches they gave in the state capitol in front of the media. However, I would encourage more critical insights on their experiences, as they continue to participate in a myriad of ways in these domestic worker

limitations but if explored it is definitely a generative site for illuminating knowledge exchanged and built upon within a collective, transgenerational space. This work is also important because of the dire need many worker collectives expressed of not having the capacity and resources needed to properly archive their organizational history and contributions. Expanding the analysis of organizational archives to explore whether additional sites follow the pattern of retrofitted strategies in domestic worker organizing would also be a fruitful site for research. As the movement for domestic workers continues to grow and expand, it would be insightful to examine how contemporary strategies continue to dialogue with conversations and strategies activated in previous generations. Lastly, I would propose expanding the methodological framework to consider domestic workers who do not have children. Although my research focused on children as generating alternate interpretations and carrying the legacy of their mother's labor, I feel it is equally important to also consider workers who don't have immediate children but might have kin networks that equally contribute to the production of a memory of their work experiences. Also, a more concentrated research project on the recent conditions under President Trump's administration is urgent to better understand the impact that it has and will continue to have on immigrant families and their experiences with domestic work, organizing, and their everyday life.

Conclusion

organizations, spaces where I did not have permission to interview them due to IRB limiting participation from minors under the age of 18.

Altogether, this dissertation is in itself a desire to inspire the construction of new sites for understanding the domestic worker experience, mobilized by diverse histories, experiences, and insights that push against systems of enclosure and exploitation. I wanted to explore social justice and transformation beyond social movements and labor organizing. Although I highlight the importance of such movements, I argue that they should not be the only viable sites for enacting social change and for understanding the diverse experiences of domestic workers. My primary inspiration were the memories I shared with my mother and aunts who cleaned houses and going with them to the homes they cleaned. My mother was very private about her experience being an immigrant and a domestic worker, yet her silence spoke very loudly to me. My aunts, on the other hand, were fantastic storytellers, and it was through these two contrasting ways of embodying our family's history that I learned how to alternate between multiple modes of archiving and processing memory that crossed borders and generations. I also benefitted from ethnic studies courses and my classmates sharing similar experiences of their lives. These courses allowed me to acquire a sense of the complexity of theoretical frameworks and interdisciplinary approaches necessary to understand our experiences as immigrant, communities of color resisting against the ongoing violence of colonialism, expulsion, labor exploitation, borders, and state repression that continues to detain and separate our families today. The transnational immigrant experience of simultaneity as an empowering condition that can question neoliberal, individualist logics directs us towards the possibility of visually (and physically) inhabiting the diverse arrangements of domestic work while also unveiling terrains of power that reckon with the remnants of a colonial history that have been altered across time. In presenting these conversations, I show that

another mode for understanding domestic work is possible—one that acknowledges unresolved tensions, elicits a nomadic memory, and resists the disappearance of bodies and labor without submitting completely to categories of recognition and (hyper)visibility. As Donna Haraway notes, "We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meaning and bodies, but in order to live in meanings and bodies that have a chance for the future" (Haraway, 1991, p. 187). These meanings and bodies are ones that will be liberated, where our relations and encounters with each other through our labor and interaction in new spaces allow for more multiplicity to take place, and together align towards a more inclusive future to come.

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