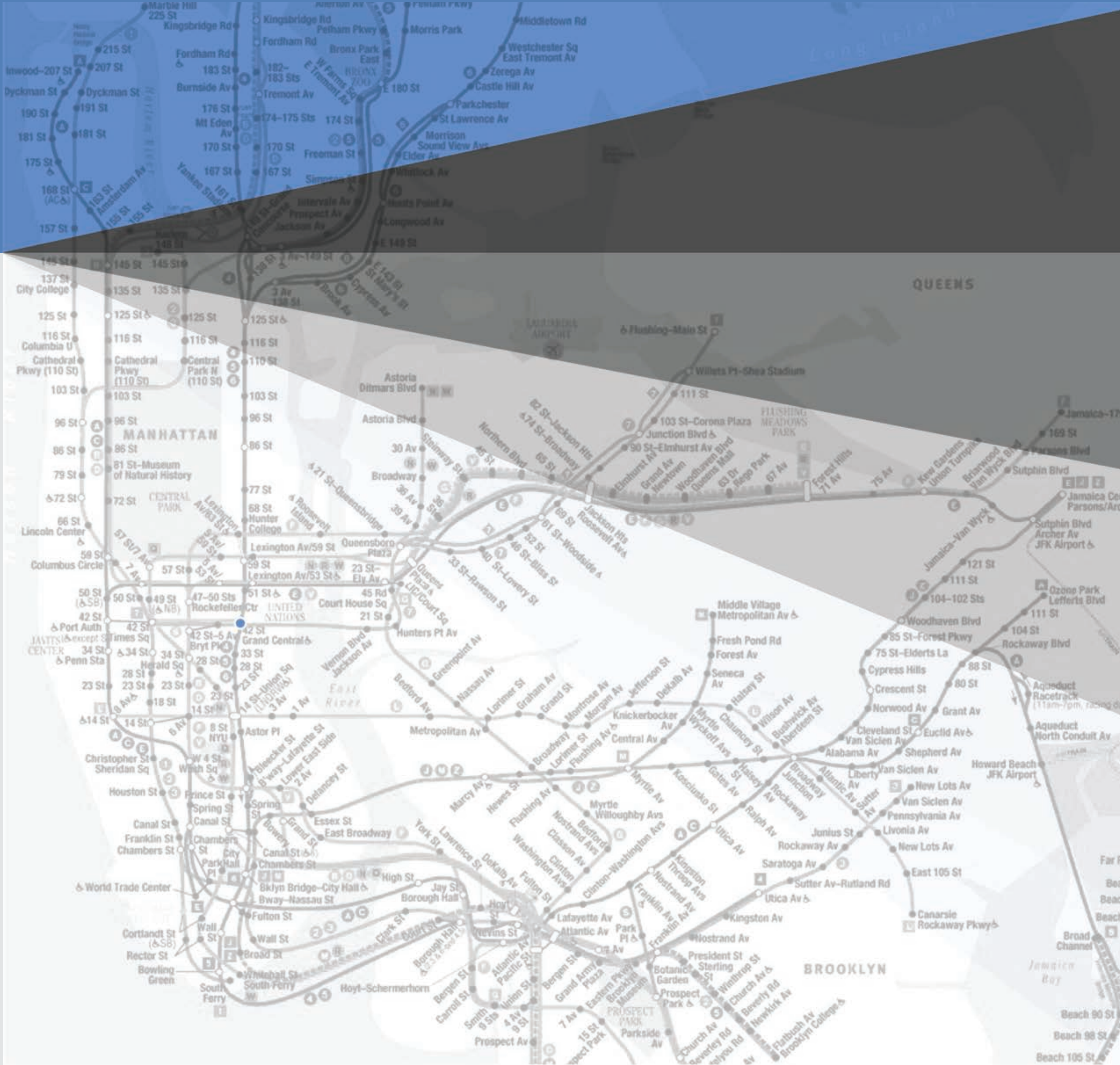

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DOMESTIC WORKER ORGANIZING IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

The Convention 189 Campaign as a Mobilization Model

By Jennifer Fish

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Workers' Rights are Human Rights

Precarity is on the rise. Low-wage service jobs have seen a significant surge in the last years, and domestic work has become one of the largest sectors of employment in the global economy. And these household workers have been almost entirely excluded from the labor protections afforded to most other workers.

According to official estimates, women account for about 83 percent of domestic workers worldwide. Overwhelmingly, this sector is comprised of poor women, immigrants, and women of color. This means that an already socially and economically vulnerable workforce is susceptible to additional difficulties stemming from discrimination and violence.

Considering the particular conditions of this sector, the International Labor Conference recognized the need for a special international instrument focused on domestic workers as early as 1948. For decades, however, no such instrument was introduced. Challenging international institutions and government negligence, informal workers' movements across the globe organized for developing new strategies and building new vehicles to take up the struggle, engaging old and new allies along the way. Domestic workers, and particularly the women among them, have been at the forefronts of these battles against precarity during the last decade, and it was their coordinated global effort that led to the adoption of the *ILO Convention Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers* (Convention 189) and the accompanying Recommendation at the 100th International Labor Conference in 2011. This achievement represents a milestone for household workers, whose conditions and place in the labor market were acknowledged for the first time. By incorporating a human rights approach to the negotiation process, it also marked a turning point for international labor regulations.

As a lead-up to the sixty-first session of the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 61), we take a look at its priority theme—women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work—from the perspective of working-class women. In this study, Jennifer Fish, Chair of the Department of Women's Studies at Old Dominion University and a key partner of domestic workers' organizations, takes Convention 189 as a case study to analyze the potential and shortcomings of a UN approach to labor rights.

The campaign is at a critical juncture this year. While domestic workers are continuing to organize at the national level in order to advocate for the convention's ratification and implementation, the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment has decided to push for ratification, with the stated support of many of its members. The collaborative campaign for Convention 189 exemplifies a way in which UN agencies can work together to enact a global standard for a key group of workers, thus ensuring the respect and protection of millions of women worldwide.

Stefanie Ehmsen and Albert Scharenberg
Co-Directors of New York Office, March 2017

Domestic Worker Organizing in the Global Economy

The Convention 189 Campaign as a Mobilization Model

By Jennifer Fish

Domestic workers commanded international attention when they mobilized at the International Labour Organization (ILO) to fight for the first global policy to recognize the rights of this historically "invisible sector" of the informal economy. On June 16, 2011, government, employer, and labor delegates to the International Labor Conference (ILC) of the ILO voted nearly unanimously to adopt Convention 189, "Decent Work for Domestic Workers." This first international set of standards on paid household labor marks a tangible victory for both the labor movement and the global women's movement. The UN-level negotiations on these formative policy protections connected national domestic workers' organizations to a global campaign, with a common appeal for the "same rights to 'decent work' as any other workers."[1] The adoption of Convention 189 represents not only a victory for domestic workers worldwide, but also a model of the potential for UN institutions to mobilize women workers and establish international standards for the protection of those most marginalized within the global economy. This paper situates Convention 189 in a larger context in which domestic worker rights exemplify a central global struggle for justice and protections. Through an analysis of the transnational civil society and workers' campaign surrounding this unprecedented acquisition of rights, this paper provides a model to analyze the potential for UN agencies to serve as sites of transnational organization, policy protections, and ultimately, rights acquisition.

"Movements matter."[2] Domestic workers' transnational activism around Convention 189 captured one of the most active expressions of the global women's movement. With "one foot in the labor movement and one foot in the women's movement,"[3] its vision reenergized historical class struggles and a women's rights campaign that confronted the very contemporary expressions of injustice contained in domestic work. Ai-jen Poo, leader of the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) and acclaimed US activist, contended, "so much of the unfinished business of this women's movement is really about bringing respect and dignity to this work."[4] In support of this vision, the ILO served as a meeting ground to bring national movements together around a common plight for global human rights. Convention 189 galvanized a moment where domestic workers could align and fight for a very tangible common claim to rights. By putting their voices on the table, in an organized activist form, they infiltrated the world's largest labor institution

1 International Domestic Workers Network, "Platform of Demands," June 1, 2010.

2 This insight is drawn from a personal conversation with Ai-Jen Poo at the 2011 ILC meetings in Geneva.

3 Marty Chen, founder of WIEGO, originally made this statement at the 2010 ILC meetings among domestic worker representatives.

4 Student discussion with the Women's Studies Department at Old Dominion University, March 22, 2016.

and demanded a space for workers' input into the policy protections developed for their own professions. As President of the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN) Myrtle Witbooi foreshadowed, "This is something that the ILO has never seen before."[5] The symbolism of this acclaimed activist moment stems from the shaking up of a very traditional global power-center by the first coordinated international movement of domestic workers. From this encounter of forces, the terms of domestic workers' activism and the ILO institution changed, while the negotiation process became a symbol for larger social struggles worldwide.

Domestic Work in the Global Economy

ILO estimates approximately 100 million domestic workers in the global economy. Women and girls comprise 75-90 percent of this sector, which serves as the largest occupation for young women worldwide.[6] In developing countries, domestic workers serve as a major sector of the informal economy. The salary remittances they provide allow the global economy to function, while forming key trade relations between sending and receiving countries. As feminist international relations scholars point out, the state participates in positioning domestic workers as key commodity exchanges between countries and regions, thereby reinforcing critical bilateral economic relations based upon the value of women's household labor.[7] According to the most comprehensive ILO data available on domestic work, 90 percent of the sector is comprised of women from the Global South. As we see through the ILC discussions, these demographics reinforce the construct of poor women of color from the developing world as the "typical third world woman" domestic worker.[8]

The Economics of Care Labor

As scholar Cinzia Solari asserts, "nothing signals 'Third World' in the international arena like the mass emigration of women to do domestic labor abroad."[9] As neoliberal market forces dominate the global landscape, a "regime of labor intimacy" contours the borders of the Global South/North through women's bodies at work. In this context, globalization hinges on the hands of the household labor provided by domestic workers. Yet in terms of rights and protections, domestic workers are globalization's exiles. To what extent are the world's least resourced paying for the shiny technology of so-called "development?" As Myrtle Witbooi asked of the privileged global policy makers, "Where would *you* be if a domestic worker didn't iron your shirt?"[10] Within these everyday relations of power between

5 Public speech at the ILC, 2010.

6 International Labour Office. 2013. "Domestic workers across the world: Global and regional statistics and the extent of legal protection." International Labour Organization.

7 For a comprehensive analysis of the state's participation in the export of domestic worker, see Christine Chin's (1998) account of the relationship between the Philippines and Malaysia in her formative book, *In Service and Servitude: Foreign Female Domestic Workers and the Malaysian "Modernity" Project*. (New York: Columbia University Press).

8 For theoretical discussions of this construction of the "typical third world woman," see Mohanty, C. T. (1991). "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and the Colonial Discourses," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. A. R. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Lourdes Torres. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

9 Drawn from the *4th Conference of the Sociology of Development Section* in reference to earlier work. See Cinzia Solari, "Resource Drain vs. Constitutive Circularity: Comparing the Gendered Effects of Post-Soviet Migration Patterns in Ukraine," *Anthropology of East Europe Review 28*, no. 1 (2010): 215-38.

10 This statement is drawn from Witbooi's original statement to the South African government in their deliberations on the first Unemployment Insurance Fund policy in March 2001. Witbooi and other domestic worker leaders have developed this direct tactic of holding decision makers accountable to their personal employment practices in both national and international policy dialogues. See Fish, *Domestic Democracy*.

"maids and madams"[11] rests an entire global system of power, where states build agreements around the outsourcing of love labor, domestic service salary remittances mediate an enormous economic disparity, and the export of women's household work restructures families throughout the world. As these forces expand, an orchestrated domestic workers' movement becomes a vanguard to reconsider protections for vast portions of the global labor force. The dialectic of transnational power and collective action extends beyond domestic work to the rights of anyone involved in precarious labor, as the shifting global landscape allows for activism's wider reach. This transnational industry of care work makes intimacy a commodity. Motherhood is globalized; love is borrowed across borders; and states are freed from the social contract to care for the basic needs of their populations.

Domestic workers are paid for their care labor on a variety of levels. As an outgrowth of colonial relations of servitude and slavery, they tend to homes, families, children, and elders, often providing the most intimate care for families to survive and thrive. In most cases, domestic workers leave their own families to care for the families of more privileged sectors of society, creating even greater demands for grandmothers and aunts to pick up this global care tax. Often, women migrate across national borders to work in the private households of more privileged employers. As the global economy relies more heavily on outsourced labor, they provide vital export revenue through the salary remittances they send home. Thus, domestic work represents an increasing reliance on intimate care work as a vital component of the global economy.

The Politics of Care Labor

Within the global configuration of this distinct form of labor, differences in gender, race, class, nationality, and citizenship status continuously reproduce unequal power relations in the household labor space. The field of domestic work is predominately occupied by women of color and migrant women. In the existing global context, employers are also women of color with greater access to class privilege, as we see in the case of the Arab states' reliance on Filipina domestic workers and the prevalence of rural African women and girl domestic workers in wealthier urban African households. Across geographic locations, hiring domestic workers allows employers to maintain their privileged position, as they are freed of many of the menial tasks that are required to maintain a household. This, in turn, reproduces fundamental inequalities of capitalist social relations.[12] Ironically, domestic workers must negotiate power and mobility within a structure that severely limits their agency[13].

In the existing context of globalization, these social inequalities are exaggerated when power differences are determined by citizenship. Migrant workers are especially vulnerable to exploitation as they fear deportation if they report any employer abuse (Anderson 2000). In many ways, contemporary domestic work reflects a form of slavery in terms of the harsh conditions that domestic workers face, including abuse, violence, threats, denial of freedom, and exploitative working conditions.[14] In many countries, children are trafficked to perform domestic labor and women are rerouted to sex work under the guise of domestic labor. The potential for social inequality to manifest in exploitative practices increases with the transnational trade of domestic workers. Without

11 Jacklyn Cock, *Maids and Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1980).

12 M. Romero, *Maid in the U.S.A.* (New York, 1992); G. Savas, "Social Inequality at Low-wage Work in Neo-liberal Economy: The Case of Women of Color Domestic Workers in The United States," *Race, Gender & Class*, Vol. 17 (2010).

13 B.S.A. Yeoh and S. Huang, "Transnational domestic workers and the negotiation of mobility and work practices in Singapore's home spaces". *Mobilities*, Vol. 5 (2010).

14 Jureidini R. and Moukarbel N, "Female Sri Lankan Domestic Labour in Lebanon: Contractual, Slavery-like Practices and Conditions," in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* Vol. 30 (2004).

access to citizenship rights, state policies and labor laws surrounding domestic work are inaccessible to migrants. Within this larger context of global restructuring, international standards are critical for both setting norms of practice and the applied implementation of protection for workers, regardless of citizenship.

The complexities of setting global standards for household work, however, stem from core ideological assumptions about the devalued nature of domestic labor, which takes place in the private household sphere and is associated with "women's work."[15] This division between public and private spheres has been central to feminist critiques of women's marginalization within the household. In their opening commentary on the case of domestic work world wide in the 2010 ILC meetings, representatives of the government of Brazil made the following statement to problematize the inequalities within this sector: "Because it is carried out in the home, domestic work is seen as part of the work carried out by women traditionally, and not remunerated. Therefore, domestic workers have been excluded from the main labor standards."[16] This statement went on to suggest that traditional constructions of women's work would need to be disrupted in order to assure fair working standards for this sector. These constructions of women's work feed the existing proliferation of transnational migration for care work. As the global economy relies more and more on service labor, domestic workers' demands for rights built upon a re-imagination of the value of women's labor in the private household, and a recognition of its central place in the global economy.

Background to the ILO Convention 189

The 2010 gathering of the International Labor Conference in Geneva marked a poignant moment for domestic worker organizations and human rights advocates because it placed "Decent Work for Domestic Workers" at the center of its tripartite dialogue. As a holdover of the League of Nations, the International Labour Organization is the only UN institution to use this collective tripartite process in which official representatives of government, employer, and worker delegations weigh in equally on the creation of policy through the social dialogue process at the center of the institutional framework and organizational process.[17] For the first time, the possibility of establishing a global set of standards for domestic labor materialized through the inclusion of this topic as one of two standard-setting agenda items within the 99th

15 For in-depth analyses of the institution of domestic labor and its embedded race, class, gender and geographic divides, see: S. Ally, *From Servants to Workers: South African Domestic Workers and the Democratic State* (Cornell University Press, 2009); J. Fish, *Domestic Democracy: At Home in South Africa* (Routledge, 2006); R. S. Parreñas, Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work (Stanford, 2001); G. Chang, *Disposable Domestics. Immigrant Women in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, 2001); P. Hondagneau-Sotelo, *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence* (Berkeley, 2001); M.R. Gumburd, *The Kitchen Spoon's Handle. Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's Migrant Housemaids* (Ithaca, 2000); B. Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work? The Global Politics of Domestic Labor* (London, 2000); C. Chin, *In Service and Servitude. Foreign Female Domestic Workers and the Malaysian 'Modernity' Project* (New York, 1998); A. Bakan and D. Stasiulis, *Not One in the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada* (Toronto, 1997); N. Heyzer, G. Lycklama à Nijehold and N. Weerakoon, *The Trade in Domestic Workers. Causes, Mechanisms and Consequences of International Migration* (London, 1994); L. Gill, *Precarious Dependencies. Gender, Class and Domestic Service in Bolivia* (New York, 1994); M. Romero, *Maid in the U.S.A.* (New York, 1992); E. Chaney and M. Garcia Castro, *Muchachas No More. Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Philadelphia, 1989) and J. Rollins, *Between Women. Domestics and their Employers* (Philadelphia, 1985).

16 Author fieldnotes, ILC 2010.

17 For a more thorough explanation of this process, see Boris and Fish, 2015.

annual conference of the ILO.[18] At her opening statement in the ILC proceedings, Tanzanian activist Vicky Kanyoka proclaimed, "we have been waiting for this moment for a very long time." The ILO had last held preliminary discussions on the particularities of the household labor sector in 1948, followed by a second call for standard-setting action in 1965. Forty-five years later, a network of over thirty domestic workers from Africa, Asia, South America, North America, and the Middle East joined global union leaders and gender and labor rights advocates to campaign for a convention and supplemental recommendations to protect the rights of domestic workers worldwide. The 100th ILC session in June 2011 marked a global human rights victory, when the ILO passed the first ever set of international standards for domestic work with a nearly unanimous vote of support from governments. Convention 189 has since become a celebrated labor and human rights victory, with ratification by 22 countries.

Getting Domestic Workers' Rights on the ILO Agenda

The placement of domestic labor on the ILO agenda as a specific sector under consideration for the most comprehensive labor protection marks a bold move within the organization and a celebrated victory for the labor, gender, and human rights struggle. The historical circumstances of domestic labor's invisibility, coupled with its placement in the private household and informal economy, led many to ask how the ILO came to consider this sector for an international convention. Four key factors allowed domestic labor to "get to the table" of the ILO: 1) an established climate for "decent work" and "fair globalization" within the ILO; 2) organizational advocacy from key players within the system; 3) the mobilization of a transnational network of domestic workers ; 4) the strategic activism and alignment of civil society organizations within the ILO tripartite standard-setting process.

The 2008 ILO Governing Body decided to place "Decent Work for Domestic Workers" on the 2010 agenda as an "attempt to bring the traditionally excluded group of domestic workers within the labor market formality."[19] According to the "Briefing Note for Worker Delegates" prepared by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC),

> *This decision followed calls by the international trade union movement and received the unanimous support of the Workers' Group of the ILO Governing Body, which saw the decision to place the item on the Conference's agenda as an historic one bringing the ILO 'back to basics' by developing standards to effectively protect vulnerable categories of workers.*[20]

These efforts to develop standards and social protections for one of the largest sectors of the informal global economy suggest an increased recognition of the growing demand and importance of domestic work across geographic locations. Furthermore, they manifest the larger ideological emphasis on "decent work" and "fair globalization" central to Director General Juan Somavia's leadership from 1999-2012.

This consideration of a domestic work convention expanded the capacity of the ILO by stretching the reach of its participation processes as well as the scope of policy coverage to the informal economy. The ILO tripartite structure is distinct to this UN agency, which places primary emphasis on shared participation and leadership among its three constituents: government, employers, and labor. Underpinning

18 Technical committees within the ILC deal with conference agenda items set two years prior. In the 2010 ILC meeting, the "Decent Work for Domestic Workers" topic comprised the only new agenda item, in the first year of discussion. Second discussions were held among members of the technical committees on the establishment of a recommendation for dealing with HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

19 ILO (2010), Report IV(2) "Decent Work for Domestic Workers."

20 ITUC (2010), "Briefing Note for Worker Delegates," internal document.

the formal ILO procedures is an organizational value that suggests "human rights documents allow for a common language to talk across boundaries."[21] The emphasis on social dialogue within the ILO allows for a formalized structure to deal with such boundaries of difference in ideology, geography, and social location. By engaging in *social dialogue* processes at the annual ILC, representatives of each constituent body jointly shape international policies and programs through their participation in a negotiated public dialogue, informed by substantive research and the input of advisory bodies. The larger shifts in the ILO's emphasis on decent work paved the way for workers to participate in the standard-setting process, together with the support of key professional ally organizations.

Domestic worker organizations influenced the initial gathering of data for the tripartite discussion by informing governments of the most relevant data and national work conditions. Within the organizational procedures for consideration of a convention, the domestic work agenda item followed the standard ILO double-discussion process, which affords two years of public negotiations on topics proposed for a convention or set of recommendations.[22] After the governing body placed domestic work on the agenda for the annual conference in 2008, the ILO office prepared a law and practice research report and distributed it to all constituents, along with a questionnaire.[23] The ILO's Conditions of Work and Employment Programme solicited comments from the 183 ILO Member States, which resulted in 103 responses, 46 of which involved consultation with workers' and employers' organizations.[24] In these formative responses, domestic worker organizations offered some of the most relevant and current data on the lived realities for this sector of the informal economy. These data informed the second ILO document, Report IV(2) "Decent Work for Domestic Workers," which included proposed conclusions for the establishment of both a convention and a set of recommendations on global standards for this sector.[25] Additionally, data from these reports informed the tripartite discussions in ways that represented the inclusion of domestic workers' voices, even when they were not represented in the formal tripartite delegations.

From the internal ILO side, getting domestic work on the agenda emerged from this ripe climate's focus on human rights, a willingness to embrace the informal economy, and key players who pushed the agenda forward by drawing upon their knowledge of the formal processes central to any ILO policy formation process. Alongside these critical conditions on the ILO side, a burgeoning movement of domestic workers galvanized its purpose on the attainment of universal rights and protections through the ILO platform.

Formation of the Domestic Workers' Movement

The participation of the aligned International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN) made the establishment of this convention unique because it infused an activist presence within the halls of the ILO. Unlike any other policy negotiation within the ILO, "actual workers" came to the table to negotiate the terms of the policies that would most directly impact their own lives. These ILC discussions on a convention for

21 Interview with ILO staff member, June 14, 2010.

22 Conventions are binding treaties that require all countries that ratify a Convention to change their national laws in accordance with the international standard-setting instrument. Recommendations are non-binding instruments intended to provide guidelines for governments and social partners on the implementation of national labor and social policies. Conventions and recommendations for the same topics are often adopted simultaneously.

23 See ILO, Report IV(1) Decent Work for Domestic Workers.

24 ILO, Report IV(2).

25 These processes of constituent input, instrument revisions, and public dialogue culminate in the adoption of a standard-setting instrument on "decent work" only if a 2/3 majority is met on the final vote.

domestic workers sparked new forms of collective organizing and women's transnational activism, as grassroots strategies met the formal international institutional and tripartite ILO procedures for the formation of policy. The 2010 and 2011 annual meetings of the ILO saw the largest ever participation of civil society representatives within the standard-setting process, unlike any former tripartite dialogue. According to lead analysts in the ILO structure, the level of interaction of rank-and-file workers within the negotiation process had not been seen previously, even though former standard-setting conferences took place for a variety of other labor sectors such as maritime workers and home-based workers. As one policy expert conveyed, "It is so helpful to see for whom you are working."

Although the formal processes of the ILO reinforce traditional power relations, the 2010-2011 ILC meetings also provide a vital opportunity to examine new forms of collective agency within this historically masculine UN agency. With its focus on domestic work, a range of participants engaged on behalf of domestic workers. In fact, the IDWN itself was comprised of not only domestic worker activists, but also professional representatives of domestic workers' rights movements throughout the world. Thus, although the IDWN represented domestic workers, it composition reflected a range of backgrounds of those who came to fight for the domestic worker cause as union organizers, professional labor experts and former workers in the sector. Under the IDWN umbrella, this NGO/civil society collection took on the identity and demands of domestic workers themselves, backed by the range of expertise in the organization.

The ability to gain access to and influence within the ILO stemmed from the international alignment of domestic workers through the support of key advocacy and professional gender and labor rights organizations. In 2006, sixty domestic worker leaders from trade unions, networks, and support organizations took part in an international conference in Amsterdam titled "Respect and Rights: Protection for Domestic Workers!" The meeting sought to align national domestic worker organizations in order to advocate as a united front for domestic worker rights within the ILO. Subsequently, a steering committee of domestic workers formed in 2008, the same year the ILO announced that it would schedule "Decent Work for Domestic Workers" as an agenda item for 2010. If the delegates decided to move forward, the ILC would take up the issue for final action in 2011.

With the concrete goal of building a global movement, advocates formed the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN), which comprises a steering committee, a group of seven advisors from six global regions, and a technical support team. The ILO process provided the first tangible organizational campaign, as the network materialized its overarching mission to promote a "strong democratic domestic workers' organization to protect domestic workers' rights" and "change power relations in society, to promote gender equality and human rights for the benefits of domestic workers."[26] The IDWN built its organizational strength and capacity through the ILO Domestic Workers Convention and a wider global campaign to promote awareness among governments. The formative organizational structure relied upon regional representatives and an executive body to establish consistent communication between the two annual ILCs, develop training and campaign resource material, and continue to educate members on strategies for influencing the ILO system. All formal meetings and correspondence of the IDWN include Spanish/English language interpretation to assure communication across lines of difference. As a united face of domestic workers, these procedural measures capture a wider motivation to recog-

26 IDWN, "Who We Are," August 23, 2012.

nize diversity while aligning across geographic, race, and ethnic lines. Throughout the process of getting to the ILO, a series of allies bolstered this network's force by supporting the global alignment of domestic workers and the critical capacity building required to bring them to the global stage, as both activists and emergent policy makers.

Gender-Labor Alliances

The IDWN's formation and continued strength stems largely from two key support organizations representing the complementary labor and gender rights dimensions of domestic workers' plight for protection. The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) became the first global union to represent the rights of domestic workers in the informal economy. From a research and policy advocacy position, the Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) network based at Harvard University supported the alignment of domestic worker organizations as a vital sector within the organization's larger focus on the informal economy. These two distinct organizational support systems strengthened the capacity for domestic workers to organize internationally and provided entrée to obtaining ILO and NGO observer status in the 2010 and 2011 annual conferences. WIEGO and the IUF gained two of the thirty–five places available to observer civil society/non-governmental organizational representatives, opening access for IDWN members to every aspect of the ILC process of policy formation.[27]

The alignment with two powerful organizations with a historical presence of participation within the ILO afforded an important political dimension that elevated the status of the IDWN. Through the use of key personal ties in this distinct convention process, WIEGO leaders capitalized on the receptivity to domestic workers' input on the convention and organized a personal meeting of the IDWN with the Director General Somavia during the opening of the 2010 conference. At this meeting, Somavia greeted each member of the network and received the organizational "Platform of Demands" for the protection of domestic workers in the form of a convention.[28] During this meeting, while maintaining his formal commitment to tripartitism, Somavia demonstrated a welcoming and encouraging response to the larger goals of the IDWN. Within this dialogue, IDWN members discussed the importance of expanding awareness of domestic worker rights beyond the ILO to a global movement that would utilize an international convention as impetus for a larger campaign for labor and gender justice. Within this conversation, Somavia recognized the potential for international instruments to motivate larger scale social movements. In this sense, he highlighted UN organizations as a pivotal point of movement mobilization and rights attainment. As the first formal IDWN interaction with the ILO official hierarchies, this meeting served as an important source of motivation for the organization and a tangible recognition of the legitimacy of domestic workers' participation in the convention process.

27 Most global unions and international organizations are considered NGOs in the ILO structure. Therefore, their access to the ILC discussions is limited to observer status. This means that delegates may take part in conversations among the worker groups on particular sub-committees. All formal tripartite discussions, however, limit verbal participation to government representatives from the 183 member states and one representative from both the employer and worker groups.

28 IDWN, "Platform of Demands."

From a strategic perspective, these two key professional ally organizations afforded domestic workers an alternative means of access to the formal worker delegations, which would have depended upon national unions' willingness to appoint a domestic worker to one of the few positions within state delegations. Since so many national unions have failed to recognize domestic worker unions as viable affiliates, their capacity to speak on behalf of this sector remained severely limited and heavily laden in male-dominated union politics. Therefore, the entrée provided by WIEGO and the UIF allowed an alternative and strategic channel by which domestic workers' voices and interests would be present within each step of the negotiations, even though they did not carry an official labor delegation badge. As evidence of the success of this organizing, however, by the second-year meetings in 2011, a few IDWN members also obtained formal seats as voting members of the labor delegations from their respective countries. As the first domestic worker to gain voting rights, Shirley Pryce, President of the Jamaican Household Workers Association, took the floor of the ILO and stated, "I am a former domestic worker, and there cannot be many of us who have spoken from this podium. I feel very proud." The evident IDWN backing of these formal moments allowed the wider domestic worker cause to find expression through key representatives. Furthermore, the collective presence of a wider IDWN network—made possible through these ally organizational processes—provided a consistent domestic worker presence that mandated a sense of accountability among policy makers.

Domestic Worker Allies

In addition to these two pillar organizations representing labor and gender, domestic workers gained the backing of a wide range of civil society organizations. A series of human rights-centered NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch, Migrant Forum in Asia, and the Hand in Hand Domestic Employers Association also gained access to the ILC meetings to advocate for domestic worker rights as part of a larger range of justice campaigns. Alongside WIEGO and the IUF, the presence of an aligned front of domestic worker unions, human rights organizations, migrant education groups, women's rights advocates, and faith-based parties tipped the balance of power in support of the convention. This wider mobilization strategy drew upon a history of social movement organizing and strategic activism central to all members of the IDWN. These NGO observers also bolstered the strength of the labor group through their supportive presence. For government representatives, they provided tangible information, background research, testimonials, and strategies to persuade other delegates to support the convention. By utilizing access to this international institution, these allied networks organized in distinct ways to assure that the experiences of those who would be most impacted by this global policy were undeniably present in visual, rhetorical, and political forms throughout the deliberations.

The strength of the integration of the domestic workers' network within the NGO observer system formed an unofficial "fourth constituent" at the ILC meetings, leading to a "tripartite-plus" forum where civil society organizations and "actual workers" carried more weight than in any previous policymaking process. Domestic worker unions, non-union worker organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society representatives, and human rights organizations assured that domestic worker representatives could take part in the establishment of standards to protect their own rights. In this sense, the strength of a civil society alliance to a certain extent overcame the historic structural gender biases of this UN institution. The fact that the 99th Session of the ILC marked the first occasion where domestic

workers accessed the inner negotiation processes says a great deal about the extent to which the formal and restrictive pillars of this historic institution have met the realities of women on the ground through direct engagement with the majority of workers. While public statements by key leaders invited the added dimension of domestic worker participation, for domestic worker representatives, negotiating the physical space, learning institutional procedures, and gaining access to meaningful platforms for public voice illustrated complexities that parallel undercurrent struggles of gender, race, and class power asymmetries. Those with knowledge, ease of access, and familiarity with the ILO's physical and institutional structures represented class-privileged populations. Furthermore, although gender equity within the ILO is improving, male delegates still hold disproportionate representation in all of the tripartite constituencies. As this aligned network of organizations strengthened the domestic worker case by situating the call for rights within larger themes of migration, child trafficking, and women's rights, it also strategically paved a way for domestic worker representatives to carve their place within this formal UN institution. Thus, the NGO network served both as a pragmatic/technical and a strategic/political force.

Domestic Worker Mobilization and Policy Strategies

This participation of domestic worker organizations and allies provides a template for exploring how civil society and women's rights organizations can make best use of UN institutions to gain rights and global attention to their cause. The process of "getting in" to the ILO plays a central part in this "happy ending" story for domestic worker rights. The other interrelated dimension of the rights victory surrounding Convention 189 can be seen in the strategies employed by the domestic worker alliance. This next section outlines the particular strategies that carved a distinct role for domestic workers to claim their rights within this UN institution.

Platform of Universal Demands

Once they "got in" to the largest and most historic labor institution, domestic workers strategically constructed a common identity to maximize their demands for rights and recognition. To make policy, they told stories. The use of personal narratives became one of the most effective tools in increasing the likelihood of passing a convention. These testimonials positioned domestic workers as "the backbone" of the global economy, keeping the ILO accountable to the women workers and migrants who hold up the international service sector. Even though they came from five continents with distinct work contexts, the IDWN demanded a global umbrella policy for *all* domestic workers. The public testimonials of shared personal experiences of oppression brought the realities of women workers into the highly procedural policy forum. By interjecting a common human appeal throughout the case for global standards, domestic workers made it impossible for government leaders to overlook those who have lived without standardized protections since the earliest establishment of relations of servitude. Their ability to speak as "one voice" for domestic workers ultimately mirrored the legitimacy of the universal rights claims that ILO Conventions and other UN human rights policies seek to establish. As they crafted a common story in the public dialogue, domestic workers built a collective appeal by emphasizing three common themes: 1) the historic nature of the

institution of domestic work; 2) individual stories of oppression as a result of exclusion from labor standards; 3) a common experience of vulnerability.

The common identity of this global network became concrete through the IDWN's tangible "Platform of Demands" document. Here the organization outlined key rights demands for all domestic workers, across the diverse representation of geographic locations and work contexts. They demanded rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining, as a means to recognize the legitimacy of domestic work. From a rights perspective, this document demanded equality, the elimination of discrimination, and the protection of children through a minimum age standard. In the actual terms of their work, this document outlined the need for a contract, fair wages, regulated working hours, vacation time, rights to privacy at work situations, occupational safety, access to social security and health/maternity rights, the protection of third-party employment agencies, and recognition of "stand-by" time as part of their hours of work. The IDWN resisted the colonial vestiges of payment in-kind and live-in accommodation. They demanded that governments take responsibility for sending domestic workers abroad by assuring their repatriation in cases of need and exploitation. Furthermore, they asked that governments provide training for domestic workers and assure the thorough gathering of statistical evidence on the industry. According to this document, these conditions formed the foundation of a larger ideological demand to be recognized "just like any other worker." As this document asserted: "We want and believe we are entitled to: the recognition that domestic workers have the same rights to 'decent work' as any other workers; the implementation of these standards for ALL domestic workers everywhere."[29]

This document coalesced the demands of the IDWN by situating the pragmatic (conditions of work) needs within a larger ideological call for recognition and government investment in protective rights. When the negotiations took place, the worker group built its stance on the demands created by this collective of "actual workers." Thus, the ILO officials who held the power to "speak for" domestic workers carried this document as a central tool in representing those directly on the ground, even when they could not formally speak within the ILO system. On a very concrete level, the IDWN placed these documents throughout the UN buildings where the negotiations took place, as a means to literally and symbolically publicize the demands of those most directly impacted by the policy that would emerge from these negotiations.

Human Rights Frameworks

Domestic workers utilized the central values of the ILO within their public stances. Once they got into the negotiations and established a strong coalition presence, IDWN representatives centered their position around persuasive interlocking arguments that spoke human rights language and pointed to ethical obligations of the ILO as a UN-agency. They utilized moral considerations, personal stories, emotional content, and historical conditions of injustice as compelling evidence to build central frameworks that linked domestic labor to three larger values: human rights, gender equity, and economic justice. By placing domestic work within a much wider context of shared priorities and ethical commitments in the international community, domestic work became a conduit for the ILO to demonstrate its emphasis on human rights, as well as the UN's established gender priorities. These vital ties provided fluid conduits for allies in government and labor representatives to take up support for the convention in a number of contexts. Their aligned approach gave domestic workers amplified credibility and social-political capital, as they held the ILO to its own ethical ethos.

29 IDWN, "Platform of Demands."

Domestic workers staked their claim as human beings with "universal and inalienable rights" to social and legal protections.[30] According to the UN doctrine, adopted in 2003, human rights must be indivisible, inter-related, equality-based, inclusive, and accountable to the rule of law. The domestic worker front pierced these principles by showing the existing divisibility of rights to social and labor protections because of the distinct nature of work within the private household, as well as the complexities of migrant, gender, and class-based location. Marcelina Bautista, IDWN's coordinator for the Latin American region, contended, "For household workers, human rights in the workplace are particularly important as they are the least respected."[31] While they spoke of the discrimination they faced in their everyday work contexts, domestic workers called the ILO to uphold its commitment to the UN Common Understanding of Rights. Marissa Begonia, of Justice for Domestic Workers, shared this narrative on her own life experience as a Filipina migrant working in the UK: "Alone in the wilderness, inside a beautiful house, behind the closed door, I work from 6 o'clock in the morning to 4 o'clock in the morning. Are two hours enough sleep for a human being? Are domestic workers not human beings?"

In Begonia's public statement, the daily conditions of her work reflect core values about her worth as a human being. While the ILC negotiations hammered out the very particular details of work contracts, payments, and recruitment time, domestic workers continually reminded the house of the larger impact of each clause they debated within the legal framework. In this sense, each of these technical dimensions reflected core labor standards placed into a larger context of human rights.

Just as the ILO Conventions require states to uphold labor policy agreements, within the negotiations domestic workers held the ILO itself accountable to aspirational UN standards, where human rights are esteemed in the highest light. In her public address at the closing of the 2010 ILC, Vicky Kanyoka, the IDWN's African Regional Coordinator, pointed to governments' responsibility to uphold these standards, even in the face of wider global circumstances that may preclude human rights priorities and their implementation in labor practice:

> *Facing the economic crisis, some governments—including those from the rich countries—are afraid of taking on further commitments. They feel they do not have the resources to organize such things as social security, maternity benefits, occupational health and safety, and regulation of employment agencies. But these are key human rights as well as labor issues.*[32]

By bringing in this human rights framework, domestic workers held a trump card in their ability to demand that the ILO honor UN standards. This larger ideal reverberated throughout even the most technical discussions. Furthermore, the ally training machinery behind the IDWN instilled "UN-speak" language as a tool for domestic workers to hold power by placing their demands within the core values of the very institution that would determine their access to such rights. One IDWN activist summarized the purpose of domestic workers' participation in the negotiations, "Like all people, we're reclaiming our human rights."[33] This capacity bolstered domestic workers' credibility, while rendering the denial of their rights unethical through the use of UN values as a litmus test of allegiance to international standards.

Affective Appeals

Through these consistent messages, domestic worker representatives also conveyed a partic-

30 For further reference, see: "The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Towards a Common Understanding Among UN Agencies," HRBA Portal.

31 WIEGO, *Impact: Domestic Workers - A Victory for Decent Work*, May 2013.

32 Public statement at ILC 2010.

33 Marcelina Bautista, personal interview conducted by Sofia Trevino, WIEGO.

ular emotional appeal within their public rhetoric. According to IDWN leaders and advisors, "we want to reach the hearts of employers." Individual narratives, stories of struggle, and highly personalized appeals provided rationale for the institutional demands each domestic worker representative included in her speech. This use of personal stories carries a particular appeal and effectiveness in widening the experiences of audience members through the use of emotion. In the case of the strategic portioning of limited space for domestic worker voices, IDWN members viewed the inclusion of personal stories as one of the most effective tools to increase the likelihood of passing a convention. Some members of the IDWN stated that the domestic workers' speeches should "leave the audience in tears." In this sense, to a certain extent, leaders of the IDWN drew upon traditional constructions of gender by enacting an emotional "women's story" within the traditionally masculine space of the ILO. Worker group leader Halimah Yacob also referenced such personal narratives by asking that voting delegates listen to the stories of domestic workers and look "deep in your heart and your conscious" when exercising a vote on the proposed conclusions.

As a central strategy, the IDWN repeatedly posed direct emotional appeals to advocate for policy protections. As they brought affect into their claims, domestic workers asked delegates to see the women who "face abuse every day" and "are left alone in the backyards of their employers."[34] This strategy of affect continually asked the tripartite body to integrate empathy when hearing the stories of domestic workers and considering their daily experiences. As emotion entered the negotiations, domestic worker representatives often acknowledged their bending of the usual protocol of the ILO tripartite procedure, thereby making this convention-setting process "a bit special." This use of emotion as a lobbying tool contributed to the distinct nature of Convention 189's negotiations. Throughout the process, domestic workers played by the rules. Rather than revolutionizing the institution, they acknowledged the overarching codes of conduct that have defined the ILO since its inception. IDWN leaders could best use the ILO's power by working with its capacity to write a global policy for domestic work, rather than revolutionizing the institution. Thus, the IDWN civil society network strategically integrated emotion, and measured it against the importance of building legitimacy by adapting to the tripartite process.

Their strong affective claims took form by emphasizing three key dimensions of domestic work. First, by centering the historic exclusion of domestic workers, a legacy of human suffering heightened the onus of responsibility for the ILO to redress past circumstances that separated families, normalized servitude, and enslaved people of color throughout the world. Second, domestic workers emphasized their high vulnerability to abuse, using extreme cases to highlight the potential for severe exploitation and all forms of trauma. By drawing on the sharp power imbalances between employers and domestic workers, IDWN representatives often referenced cases of extreme abuse central to the nature of unregulated labor in the private household. In their statements and input in the process, they demonstrated how such abuse takes physical, emotional, and sexual forms. By highlighting the bodily and emotional layers of oppression in their own experience, domestic workers repeatedly evidenced the painful realities of abuse to sensitize delegates' understandings of the impact of protections. For instance, domestic worker statements often referenced severe psychological suffering as a result of the frequent familial separation required to perform domestic work, sharpened by the demands for migration embedded in that work. As one domestic worker activist from Guatemala asserted, "Our children are left at our grandmothers' houses."[35] As they drew upon

34 ILC fieldnotes, 2010.

35 ILC fieldnotes, 2011.

the power differentials between employers and domestic workers, representatives highlighted the emotional hardship of facing the sharp inequalities between their own lives and those of the families they served. For instance, daily tasks like walking employers' dogs—while leaving their own children to the care of aunts and grandmothers who often reside far away in the most basic living standards—caused extreme psychological hardship for women. As leading South African activist Hester Stephens recollected, "there is a gap between you and your children."[36] Thus, affective claims-making took form through compelling stories and examples of extreme suffering that placed exclamation points on domestic workers' rhetorical stances. Their *cri de coeur* created a social dialogue process that demanded a certain level of respect and empathy for the workers in the room, who had lived through experiences of severe suffering and emerged as activist leaders. This rhetoric ultimately played a central role in tipping the favor to convention support for domestic workers.

In a related emotional strategy very distinct to this form of labor, IDWN leaders often brought up delegates' own use of domestic workers, and at times played upon this in their interpersonal encounters with governments and employer representatives. "How would you feel if your domestic worker were not protected?", they would ask. Through these exchanges, delegates in each of the tripartite bodies had to look at their own lives when confronted with the affective strategies of domestic workers. In some instances, however, male delegates responded to these public confrontations with humor, and a touch of dismissal of the cause. In the 2010 negotiations, three members of the National Domestic Workers Alliance met Kamran Rahman, vice chair of the employers delegation and the strongest public opponent of the convention and its philosophical foundation to regulate service labor. Rather than recognizing the value of domestic work, he positioned it as a special case not relevant to international law. On behalf of the employers, Rahman led a series of maneuvers that attempted to stall the negotiations and even prevent consideration of a convention. Yet IDWN leaders wanted to meet Rahman to break through his position with a personal encounter. Their first statement to this global capital spearhead proclaimed, "We know you have a heart."[37] To this, Rahman laughed and concurred that his heart was intact, then agreed to smile for a photo with these three domestic workers. This exchange captures a certain ironic quality within the convention interactions, where parties who stood in ideological opposition could jest and engage over the idea of breaking through these divides with emotion or "heart" agency. Such micro exchanges accomplished one of the most impactful strategies domestic workers employed throughout the policy-making process—they made public spaces personal.

Economic Advocacy

If they could pay us what they owe us from our girlhood, the entire economy would be in debt.

— Juana Flores, NDWA[38]

The IDWN approach accepted the ILO's invitation to fair globalization, with an activist's edge. Rather than advocating for the complete alleviation of paid household work—with its origins in a history of servitude, slavery, and sharp socio-economic divides—the IDWN demanded "decent work" and "all the benefits of the formal economy." Again and again, domestic workers asked the ILO to see "domestic work as work, just like any other."[39] To the international media, IDWN representatives reinforced their demands for equal recognition, making

36 Author interview, June 2010.

37 ILC fieldnotes, 2010.

38 Public statement at the Domestic Workers Committee Discussions of the 2011 ILC.

39 Statement repeated by the IDWN and its leaders throughout both the 2010 and 2011 ILCs.

statements to the effect of, "Domestic workers are a representative sector of the global economy, and we deserve full labor and social protections."[40] In many ways, their stances aligned with the mainstream model of economic development—where capitalism's expansion necessitates a greater need for specialized intimate care labor. In her book, *Servants of Globalization*, scholar Rhacel Parreñas shows how domestic workers supply massive amounts of human capital across national borders to assure the productivity and constant growth of our larger system of economic globalization.[41] Given this reality, domestic workers' demands for the ILO's transnational labor protections and the assurance of "decent work for domestic workers" normalized service labor as a private commodity exchange, rather than the state's responsibility. As IUF gender expert Barbro Budin posited, "Domestic workers play the role that public service should do."[42] Even though most domestic worker activists ideally aligned with this state responsibility for child and elder care, they also recognized an existing context that assures the growth of domestic work as vital to the service economy and transnational exchange relations. As one advocate put it, "to exclude domestic workers is to turn our backs on the realities of the global economy."[43] Rather than fighting a revolution that holds states accountable to support the labor that regenerates society and allows nations, governments, capital, and the global relations to flourish, the ILO's "decent work" agenda strives to elevate the quality of this service commodity and bring it into the existing neo-liberal capitalist development frameworks.

Domestic worker activists walked a fine line to balance revolutionary aspirations, collective resistance to dominant forces, and recognition of the ILO agenda as a pivotal turn toward realizing rights. As they strategized on how to maximize protections within this overarching global ethos, domestic workers maintained core activist practices by pushing the limits of the ILO in their tactics and nuanced persuasions. To balance these perspectives, the IDWN held a trump card that elevated their position within the negotiations. Through their embodiment of lifetimes of direct service within this "hidden" sector, domestic workers asked for "decent work" as a retribution for the suffering they endured. Their shared requests for equal rights amped up the legitimacy, urgency, and ethical grounding of the IDWN position by continually referencing the price domestic workers paid for their lifetimes of labor in unregulated private households.

This dual position domestic workers assumed—as both accepting the ILO's "decent work" agenda in the existing economic system and demanding their access to fair labor because of the distinct history of oppression in this sector—echoes Eileen Boris' notion of the "hybrid domestic worker." In her assessment of rights claims and policy history, Boris demonstrates a prevailing tension between framing "domestic work as work" and recognizing the distinct conditions that arise through the very nature of private household employment. This hybrid standpoint is evident throughout the ILO negotiations, as domestic workers positioned themselves as both worthy of standard labor regulations and at the same time in need of "special protections" because of their distinct vulnerability in unregulated household work contexts.[44] Thus, domestic workers leveraged persuasive capital from their own life histories, as they asked for rights within this prescribed

40 2011 WIEGO training for domestic workers at the ILC.

41 Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Eileen Boris and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, eds. *Intimate Labors: Cultures, Technologies, and the Politics of Care* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

42 Personal interview, November 2014.

43 ILC fieldnotes, 2011.

44 Eileen Boris posits the notion of domestic workers as hybrid workers because of this dual plight for recognition as workers and consideration as a special category. For further discussion of this concept, see Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein, *Caring for America, Home Health Workers in the Shadow of the Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

ILO framework of "decent work in the context of fair globalization." Rather than demanding Juana Flores' proposed repayment of the full debt of their collective lost girlhoods, or staking a revolution to hold states and men more widely accountable to the costs of social reproduction, the IDWN sought tangible rights, recognition, and a larger portion of the resources generated in the existing global economy. From this perspective, the IDWN positioned domestic work as a necessary and unwavering labor resource that would only grow with the direction of the global economy.

From this perspective, they strived to elevate the conditions of household labor by expanding the notion of domestic work to that of "care labor" to address the prevailing "compassion deficit" in the existing global economy.[45] In the United States, this shift takes expression in the National Domestic Workers Alliance's pioneering leadership in "building a movement of love" to support "Caring Across Generations."[46] This shift to care work positioned the women who perform paid "labors of love" as benevolent, noble, and often "angelic" pillars for the most needy portions of the global population. Rather than devaluing traditionally feminized domestic work, or linking it to "illegal immigrants," the care movement reconstructed women who perform this labor as empathetic, conscientious human beings who "assure the long-term wellness of our elders." This call to recognize domestic workers as human beings who "care for our most precious resources" reflects one central aspect of the larger IDWN strategy to elevate the status of domestic work beyond "maids" and "bed pan changers" to vital care contributors in the most pronounced stages of life.[47] Furthermore, by demonstrating the crucial role domestic workers play across the continuums of the lifespan, employers' dependency on this sector is evident, as is the often long-term nature of the employment relationship itself. Their call to consider the household as a space of life-affirming care, as opposed to a reflection of the demands of "dirty work," shifted the terrain of the policy discussions while also personalizing the sector for delegates, all of whom face care demands at some point in their life.

With these unavoidable needs to reproduce daily life and care for loved ones within the household, domestic workers supply critical resources in a global economy where these demands cut across social strata. Their strategy emphasized the specialized care labor necessity that allows more privileged portions of the population to participate in the formal economy. As one domestic worker delegate from Brazil expressed in the 2010 committee meetings, "We are the enablers for others who are then free to go out and work."[48] The National Domestic Workers Alliance in the US has branded this concept as its central campaign slogan, with MacArthur Genius Awardee Ai-jen Poo at the forefront, celebrating domestic work as "The work that makes all other work possible." On public platforms and throughout her book, *The Age of Dignity*, Poo tributes the sacred work of care and calls for a shift in our collective responsibility to assure that care labor is woven into the fabric of society.[49] This framework posits that better protections for domestic workers uplift all. By treating domestic workers with dignity and respect, and assuring rights, advocates continually emphasized a multiplier effect through which the implementation of Convention 189 would ripple into better lives for employers, the families of domestic workers, and the wider societies in which they work. Vicky Kanyoka, IDWN African Regional Coordinator, focused her two speeches at the opening and closing of the 2010 ILC on these multiple benefits of increasing the quality of work for domestic workers: "Providing more protection for women through this Convention

45 National Domestic Workers Alliance Care Congress, 2012.
46 NDWA campaign launched at the 2012 Care Congress.
47 Ibid.
48 ILC fieldnotes, 2010.
49 Ai-jen Poo, *The Age of Dignity: Preparing for the Elder Boom in a Changing America* (New York: The New Press, 2015).

will impact on the well-being of so many families throughout the world—those that these workers care for, and also their own."[50]

In her second public address, Kanyoka spoke the ILO language by contending, "Decent work for domestic workers is an effective way of reducing poverty, and increasing the quality of the work provided to millions of households."[51] This poverty reduction promise holds ground in the UN system. By demonstrating such wider impacts, domestic workers held the ILO to its own UN-binding commitments. Such values are echoed in the ILO's report on the 2010 discussions on domestic work, where it claims that decent work protections, "can contribute to a greater welfare for the citizens, to the wellbeing of employees, and to greater gender equality."[52] With these assurances, who could say no to domestic workers' requests for fair working conditions?

By emphasizing the increased capacities of "all other work" through their care for employers and their loved ones, domestic workers leveraged wider support for their necessity in the larger global social, political, and economic arenas. As lead domestic worker activist Ernestina Ocha from Peru proclaimed, "*Las trabajadoras del hogar somos el motor, el aceite, la espina dorsal de la sociedad*."[53] By claiming that domestic workers are the "motor, oil, and backbone" of society, Ocha contends that without them, society cannot operate. So, domestic workers' strategy asked the ILO to pay attention to the "cogs in the wheel" of global labor. As they focused on the needs of the wheels, domestic workers' strategy succeeded by pulling on the heartstrings of good colonial principles to "treat your staff well." Yet by doing so, they also agreed not to raise questions about where the wheels were headed. Rather, by caring for "other workers" in the international economy, the larger machine would optimize its performance through the assurance of migrant women, who would be better treated by regulating capitalism's new domain—the global household.

Campaign Reflections: Achievements and Challenges

The ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers marked a human rights victory through its innovative use of the UN as a forum for women workers to participate in the crafting of rights. As the largest collective of women workers to enter the ILO, this process set a precedent that demonstrates how civil society organizations can enlarge their influence in the policy-making arena. Here, the alliances of NGOs, domestic worker organizations, and global unions bolstered the political and pragmatic stance of the women workers whose lives were at stake in this policy process. By positioning domestic worker rights as human rights, in line with the larger interests of a range of international NGOs, this convention "cause" became a conduit to address larger global concerns surrounding justice, human trafficking, migration, and child labor.

Through the potential to forge a policy, this process also galvanized a global movement. Former regional, state, and local movements gained access to mobilization efforts and organizations of domestic workers worldwide. By linking with a transnational domestic workers' movement, these localized organizations clarified their priorities through the policy formulation process. As many domestic worker repre-

50 ILC public statement, 2010.
51 ILC public statement, 2010.
52 ILO (2010), "Decent Work for Domestic Workers".
53 ILC fieldnotes, 2011.

sentatives reported, they left the ILO process with tangible increased empowerment, as a result of the global stage and the wide arrangement of sister organizations and international allies. Furthermore, through their exposure in the ILO process, domestic workers gained skills that allowed them to work more effectively with their own government, as well as international policy makers. Shirley Pryce, lead delegate for Jamaica, wrote a poem to international policy makers following her experience, claiming, "now I stand with you, toe to toe." These strategic capacities extended domestic workers' reach far beyond the ILO itself.

This process also demonstrated the capacity to draw upon women's stories and standpoints to influence policy. With this unprecedented involvement of "actual workers," the ILO had to face the direct recipients of the policy decision it would make. Through the distinct position of domestic workers themselves, policy makers had to account for their own households as they faced the IDWN within the negotiation process. By asking delegates to consider their own homes and "vote with your heart," domestic workers crafted a new form of emotional capital based upon the nature of the labor they provided, and employers' dependence on that labor for the daily reproduction of their households and their families. This use of emotion provided an effective and distinct vehicle to persuade policy makers on the plight of those domestic worker representatives in the room.

Among the challenges of this domestic worker policy, the pragmatic requirements to get domestic workers to the UN venues in Geneva involved a substantive effort, in terms of financial resources, training, and long-term support. Simultaneous interpretation took place in three languages, while the logistical coordination to get domestic worker representatives to Geneva mandated a substantive amount of resources. In order to build a movement, domestic workers had to rely upon larger organizations to support the practical considerations of involvement in the Convention 189 process. With these realities came some questions about who spoke "for" domestic workers? Given the professionalization of the IDWN organizations, the lines between those who worked as full-time domestic workers and those who represented the industry drew some divisions, alongside those of region and language. Those with time to access the extensive demands of the meetings were more often representatives who could afford the time and dedication required for this process. Thus, the crafting of a united front of domestic workers did not come to be without recognition, and at times confrontation, of the realities of difference undergirding this movement, and its simultaneous demands for a united stance. In the end, domestic workers' negotiation of the political capital needed to "get in" to the structures of the ILO continuously balanced against these negotiations of stance and difference within the movement itself.

Assessing Outcomes

The ILO Convention process recognized both domestic workers and informal economy workers through the adoption of a global set of standards for this sector. Through Convention 189, a larger dialogue opened about the value of those formerly left outside of the purview of global protections. Through this policy victory, domestic workers gained recognition and entrance into a larger network of human rights organizations. No longer would domestic work be isolated in private households. Rather, justice for this sector would be linked

to wider struggles for gender rights, labor justice, and global equality. With the passage of Convention 189, domestic worker organizations gained valuable tools and political strategies that would allow them to gain a stronger stance within their own governments to fight for rights at the national and regional levels. Thus, alongside these tangible achievement of rights, domestic worker organizations gained substantive strength in the political spheres that held the more direct influence on their ability to acquire rights locally.

Domestic workers repeatedly assessed the outcome of their achievements by declaring, "now we are on the map." With the dialectic of globalization's forces that structure severe economic injustices, particularly in the informal economy, domestic workers drew from this same system of interconnectedness to obtain global rights. Through networks, social media, and organizational mobilization, they used the technological tools of globalization to realize this policy victory. No longer would domestic workers be seen as invisible, or "in the backyard" of their employers. They took on an activist identity through the wide recognition that Convention 189's platform afforded. In some assessments, this political public relations achievement may be more influential than the policy outcome itself.

From the passage of Convention 189, and the political mobilization of domestic workers worldwide, in 2013 the IDWN formed the first ever global union of domestic workers. The leaders who had joined forces to lobby for Convention 189 took their strength and skills from the ILO to develop the first global union, and the only international union led by women. In Montevideo, Uruguay, site of the first country to ratify Convention 189, domestic worker representatives gathered to found the International Domestic Workers Federation, to ensure that their efforts to fight for rights, justice, and dignity would not end with the achievement of international policy alone. At the gathering, the original supporters of WIEGO and the IUF joined forces and committed their continued support to assure that this "dream became a reality" for all domestic workers. Thus, from the convention process, a progressive political movement to mobilize informal workers launched through this transnational union of domestic workers.

This movement marks an historic moment for those left outside of labor protections. Certainly, for the ILO, it represents a pivotal opening of direct response to the demands of civil society and workers themselves. This model may be applied to other UN policy-making processes, as those most impacted by the terms of global negotiations take part in the very process of crafting protections. With this victory "on paper," however, domestic workers rights will only be measured with state ratification of this policy. As Louise McDonough, leading delegate to the Australian government stated, "there is no doubt that the measure of our success is in terms of the impact the Convention will have in the real world." In order for rights to "have teeth," domestic workers must be able to access them in their daily lives. In particular, domestic workers outside of the union leadership realm must be aware of these rights, and able to leverage them, for the negotiations in Geneva to make a real difference. As we continue to assess the impact of this distinct "tripartite plus" global policy process, domestic workers take this historic accomplish and strive to realize that "a victory for one is a victory for all."

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