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NEWS AND POLITICS

# Domestic Workers Are Women of Color and Immigrants Who Deserve More Respect

"Recognize domestic work as real work.  
Domestic work makes all work possible."

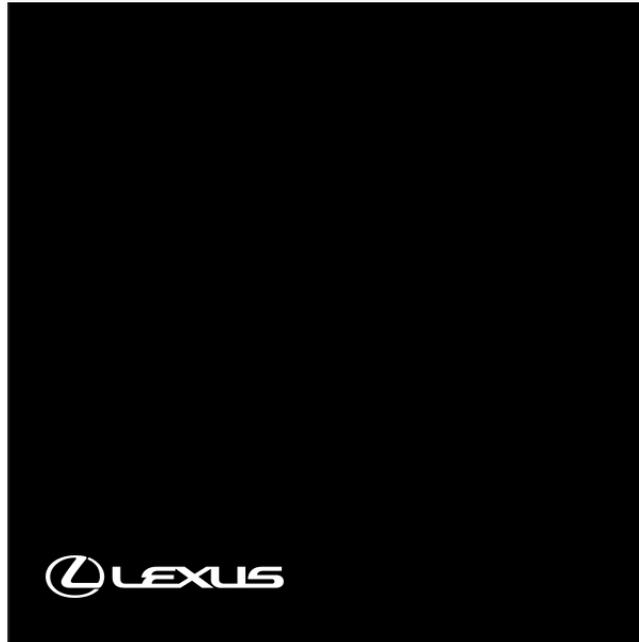
By **Taylor Crumpton**

April 23, 2018

Over time, black and brown women workers and organizers have laid the [foundation](#) for civil rights and social movements in the United States through their organizing efforts around the issues that impact their lives, families, and communities.



Approximately 2 million people in the United States workforce are domestic workers; the majority of which are women of color and immigrant women. They provide human services such as care and support for elders and individuals with disabilities, nannies for children and youth, and taking care of household responsibilities.



Subjected to systemic abuse and discrimination, they have utilized their experiences to organize liberation efforts to shatter the oppressive power structures silencing them. Their voices have brought forth equity and freedom for women and girls, which are often intentionally left out of labor organizing due to their race and gender.

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Devastated over the 2012 death of [Trayvon Martin](#), June Barrett, a domestic worker and organizer with the Miami Workers Center transformed her heartbreak into activism. [She](#) began to organize home care workers in South Florida to fight against the wage gaps, racial abuse, and physical abuse experienced in the workplace.

"Seeing the domestic workers gave me all the power I needed to share my story of sexual violence," June tells *Teen Vogue*. She described the opportunity as her "moment

to get involved.”

“I wanted to see some changes and give every part of being to the movement,” she says. A movement led and organized by domestic workers advocating for their work to be acknowledged and protected under a federal bill of rights, which currently does not exist.

"Recognize domestic work as real work. Domestic work makes all work possible," June says.

Similar to many domestic workers, female farm workers are excluded from discriminatory federal legislation and protections. Mónica Ramírez, activist and president of Alianza Nacional de Campesinas (National Farmworker Women's Alliance), tells *Teen Vogue*, "There shouldn't be a threshold for [women and girls] farm workers to be covered under legislation."

Due to farm size and language barriers, predatory behaviors and practices hurt female farm workers who can make as little as \$11,000 a year due to their race and gender gap, Moníca says. Their employment status allows their children to be eligible for work — but also to potentially be preyed upon by farm owners.

Moníca works with women farmworkers, and says "nine out of 10" talk about sexual harassment as an issue they face. Domestic and farm workers are "organizing across sectors of the system, to ensure it works better, because everybody deserves protection," she says, stressing that the relationship between the two movements is focused on the improvement of work conditions of the black and brown women who largely serve in these roles, and have done so over time.

These movements originated under the leadership of such women as [Dolores Huerta](#), co-founder of the United Farm Workers and [Dorothy Bolden](#), founder of National Domestic Worker's Union of America. These two women who fought for labor and civil rights during the 1960s so they could exist in the workplace today. Despite their impact, their organizing work is still often [silenced](#), even though their [labor](#) on the ground is what made the legal victories for equality under federal legislation possible.

Their legacy is carried on by a new generation of black and brown women-led labor organizations such as [La Colectiva de Mujeres](#), [Fe y Justicia Worker Center](#), [Miami Workers Center](#), and the [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#) who continue to fight for federal protections and equal

compensation. This new generation of organizers are using their voices to set and lead an agenda that centers the experiences of black and brown women and girls in the labor movement.

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