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Transnational Homecare Workers: Reconceptualizing the Domestica Model

This paper focuses on a success story for transnational care workers. It argues that while the immense In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) homecare workforce in California is composed disproportionately of transnational care workers and people of color that this group has been able to transform an exploitative care job into a decent job with dignity that pays a living wage and health benefits. Approximately half the people currently doing the work are foreign-born and fit as squarely in the demographic profile of transnational care workers as do domestic workers and childcare workers. It argues that homecare is a strategic point of intervention in the struggle to improve the lives of many low-wage women workers with less than a high school education. As one of the fastest growing low wage jobs in the United States, homecare is an important job in many low wage communities. But it is not the only job that homecare workers do and as such the problem of exploitation of homecare workers is more generally the problem of exploitation of low wage workers more so than of care workers. Strategic efforts to improve the conditions of homecare providers must focus on the problems of low-wage immigrant communities and the whole range of jobs done in those communities, rather than view this as a problem simply of the undervaluation of caring labor.