

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

**DOMESTIC WORKERS UNITED**  
**Interview afc2015027\_03300\_ms02**  
**Christine Lewis interviewed by Patricia Francois**  
**Full Transcription. Part 2 of 2**

*Christine Lewis and Patricia Francois were principal fieldworkers for this project. This is Part 2 of a longer interview with Christine Lewis. For Part 1, see: afc2015027\_03199\_ms03.*

**TRANSCRIPTION**

Pat Francois: So, good afternoon. My name is Patricia Francois and this will be part two of archiving the stories of domestic workers.

What is your name?

Christine Lewis: Christine Lewis.

Pat Francois: So, we're going to continue part two from where we left off.

Would you say that you, or any worker that you know, has been exploited due to immigration [00:00:30] status?

Christine Lewis: I can't speak for myself but you know, you hear stories all the time where women are actually afraid to ask for what is theirs. When I say what is theirs, like back pay, or a day off, or just feeling victimized because they might be undocumented or documented, and a person's tracking them ... tracking these workers with immigration.

Now, my thing about [00:01:00] that is that, you're working for this person that's none of their business to be able to even tell you that. To me, when you decide to work with these people, your personal things, is your personal things.

Pat Francois: I agree.

Christine Lewis: Yeah, your personal life is your personal life.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Right? Whether you're undocumented, whether you have a green card, whether you don't have a green card, it's nobody's business but your own ... because they use it against you. People use things against [00:01:30] you. Your very friends use things against you.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

I say that to say, you hold those things, especially those things that are sacred to you. Right? You don't have to tell your employer but I felt situations like that across the board, the woman who came and say to me, "Christine, my employers say, you know, if I don't take ... what's wrong with me? I'm going to call immigration." But my point with that is, that employer old, same, problems. It's not the worker. [00:02:00] It's really not the worker.

Pat Francois: Do you know of somebody who have been exploited?

Christine Lewis: Oh yeah. You mean what been told that ...

Pat Francois: Could you elaborate a little more on it?

Christine Lewis: Elaborate a little more. Yeah.

One of the woman said to me, she say, "Christine, when I went to ask for my back pay and the woman said, 'You know something, I have no ... you're not privy to back pay and furthermore, you're undocumented.'" The woman run across the street to tell me that, that's when I tell her, "Why did [inaudible 00:02:26] so important?".

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Yeah, you understand? Because they use [00:02:30] it. They use that to stiff you your wages. You know? They don't want to give you what is due to yours so they use everything else except the book, except paying you a decent wage. Right? And, to intimidate. It's all about intimidation.

Can you imagine taking care of somebody's prized possession, their children, and been stricken with words that "we'll call immigration on you" and you know you're hired. In that case, you know you hired a person undocumented. All of the sudden, you know, it's [00:03:00] just pathetic. That's all it is, intimidation and instilling fear.

Our women fall for it not recognizing that they have rights. They fall for it and become afraid.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Yeah.

Pat Francois: Until they meet with Domestic Workers United to learn about their rights.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: That too. For real.

Pat Francois: Do you ever share cultural things from your heritage with a family [US 00:03:24]? For example, food, language, folk tales [00:03:30] or beliefs about life and death?

Christine Lewis: Okay. I remember, I used to work for the little girl, who I love dearly, [Isabelle 00:03:40].

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: I'd give her the juice from the box. The juice from the box and, I'd shake the box, shake the box. I'd say ... let me remind myself what I would say. Shake it so that the sediments won't settle. [00:04:00] And she was still laugh. She found that to be so funny. But, in the juice boxes, there's a residue of, we could say gunk or the heaviness of the juice settles to the bottom, right? You see it. You buy the juice and you see it.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: She used to laugh because she used to pretend like I was slow to speech. I'm so much this teacher. [Isabelle 00:04:24], make sure and shake that box so that the sediments wouldn't settle. They'll go all over the drink. She would still laugh.

So, it [00:04:30] was the word, I think, sediments, which was interesting to her as she was about ... [Isabelle 00:04:37] must have been seven or eight ... maybe nine or ten, respectfully. As she grow, she would always reverberate that back to me. Shake the box until the sediments go away.

The food, oh my God, there was something called fried rice. Those kids loved ... well, I like fried rice myself ... all the vegetable I used to cut up and make, and put [00:05:00] some chicken in it. I used to cut the chicken really small and fry the vegetables and fry the chicken. And, oh my God, if you wanted to see those children eat all the vegetables, was to cook fried rice. They loved me some fried rice.

Especially when children don't eat asparagus. Especially when children don't eat broccoli. You cut up all those vegetables small ...

Pat Francois: And put them in the fried rice.

Christine Lewis: And you put it in the fried ... you can use rice. You can use noodle. Oh, they enjoy that. They enjoyed ... they really [00:05:30] enjoyed that food.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Culture ... I mean, how could you not? We come from different places. The whole inflection of who we are comes into the house with us when we take care of children. Even the family. Okay, so you're taking care of an American child. You're taking care of an American child. That child has no inclination where Trinidad is.

Pat Francois: No.

Christine Lewis: You come down and start to sing a song. Aye, Aye, Aye, Oi, Oi, Oi, an shi tel el [a 00:05:59] [00:06:00] . They want to know, "Hey, what was that you singing?". That was a calypso, right?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Those children ... You know what? I like to say it like this, it's a gift that we bring into these homes that we work with because we give these children a gift of cross-culturalism.

They've never been Trinidad. They eat a spices. Like for instance, I would bring a bottle of [jig 00:06:20] sauces, right? And I would season the chicken ... marinade the chicken with it [jig 00:06:27] sauce. Little man would love it. He would, "Christine, [00:06:30] are you making that today?. Or, and I give him ... I'll bring him [row 00:06:33] tea, from Brooklyn. That [inaudible 00:06:37] with the curry chock chick peas inside. Oh my God. All Jamaican patties.

Pat Francois: Oh, Lord!

Christine Lewis: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Pat Francois: They love it.

Christine Lewis: Listen, they look forward. So, this is the exposure to where we come from.

Now, I'm not Jamaican, but I give him a cross-pollination...

Pat Francois: Culture.

Christine Lewis: ... or cross-culture, of the foods that we eat in the Caribbean and [00:07:00] they love it! It's just a gift.

Pat Francois: Love it.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: Yeah. It's just a gift.

The way I cook food ... the language. Like one day, you know how we say a tree? Untree, right? Free, free, untree. When [Theo 00:07:14] got older, he would say ... he would look at me in my face and say, "Tree". He find that to be funny in that he was meaning three. Number three. But Caribbean folks say, "Tree".

[00:07:30] You listening to me?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Caribbean folks say, "Tree". So, one day he come from home from school and he say, I think he was parodying. I think he was a Jamaican as a parody by saying, "Christine, tree". Instead of saying three.

He cracked up. He find that to be so funny. So, here it is we have the cultural nuance, right? I want lingos. I want dialect.

Pat Francois: [00:08:00] Yes.

Christine Lewis: It's funny but yet, we raise children to be within that word, cultural, cultural framework. We raise these children to be really dynamic.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: To understand, across the board. We talk about carnival, we talk about politics from whence we come. I might watch the TV and say, why the are they carrying on so? I'm not used to the American politics. I'm used to the Trinidadian politics we get up one wall and then [00:08:30] see a black Prime Minister, black President. That's what we used to, we not used to that in the states.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: All these ... Bringing the language, bringing the food, bringing the culture. They like to play the steel drums. I bring in one there and I brought it to the house and I played it for them.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: The song of the steel drum. It's like bringing them back to the island but how could we not? We're from where island is, some of [00:09:00] us.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: Do you dance as well for them?

Christine Lewis: Oh, yeah. No ... Before you go to the dance. One day Isabelle act up. She act up, she act up, she real ... nothing I do that day. She was a grouch. She complained, she carry on. I look through because you can't strike the children.

Pat Francois: No, you can't.

Christine Lewis: You can't strike them. You can't hit them. What do I do?

I look through the window [00:09:30] and the East and I pray the loudest. I prayed the loudest that I could pray.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: She stood in the corner and she looked at me. I'm praying but I'm kind of looking at her, right? Would you know that, she stop acting up?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: I said, oh Father! Help me today! What do I do? What do I say?

Isabelle got as quiet as a lamb because she wants to swear that I was [00:10:00] a mad woman. I look ...

Pat Francois: I can imagine.

Christine Lewis: [crosstalk 00:10:01] when I fold my arm but I'm not kind of segway, looking at her behind my head. Right? I pray like I was like [inaudible 00:10:09] and soul.

Pat Francois: She understood though.

Christine Lewis: She stopped gouching.

Pat Francois: She understood.

Christine Lewis: It was, Christine! This. Christine! She whined that day and I say, Lord. What to do? She ... Yeah.

Pat Francois: The will of God. Huh?

Christine Lewis: I think it [00:10:30] was strange to her too.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Little Isabella might have been 8 or 9, again. It was strange to her. Well, who could I be talking to through the window? I have to be crazy to, right?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Here it is ... and kids like make believe, right?

Pat Francois: Yes, they do.

Christine Lewis: Within the make believe, I think she was really stunned because I folded my arm and didn't talk to her. I started to pray to the top of my lungs and she was in the back of me. She came calm as a cucumber. Calm now.

You talk about dance, yes, [00:11:00] I dance. My culture of dance are from Cuban, a bit of jazz. I dance and when I dance they laugh. I tell you, I got the whole family to dance because when I start with my folly's everybody end up dancing ...

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: ... And singing. Yeah.

Pat Francois: That's nice.

Christine Lewis: The whole cultural thing from whence we come. That's, I think, the beautiful thing about giving to anybody you work for is a gift of culturalism. They might take it for granted. We go through wage theft, we [00:11:30] go through disgusting wages, lone hours on the pay, over worked, tired. Sick and tired of being sick and tired. But, when you see you could bring your love of food and culture, even though they don't pay for that, that's a the front payment by the wear.

Pat Francois: Oh, yeah.

Christine Lewis: They don't pay for that. It's a good feeling. It's good for the children.

I believe, personally, this is just my impression, that when these kids go to school they become well rounded [00:12:00] children.

Pat Francois: They do.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: They have a nanny who is from a different place, a different culture, a different nuance all together. I look at Theo, and all Theo friends right now are black. It's funny.

Pat Francois: Mhm (affirmative).

Christine Lewis: It's just funny. Especially for white folks, when you work with white folks, most times their friends you can look through the pictures and see if there's some black friends. When I look at my employers and a picture to see if ... it kind of reveals a lot to me. Especially when we live in a world with cultures and [00:12:30] different people that are different from us.

Not to mention books. Books that I read, I bring to the children that ... especially that speak how different we are but we're the same, we're just different. Our complexion, our skin tone and all of that. When I look at these pictures and I look back now with the kids and who ... when it's on Facebook and I see Theo assimilate, it's amazing.

[00:13:00] The first person he see as a caregiver is a black woman, right? They're [inaudible 00:13:04] black friends. Some of them may not but I look at his friends and I'm like, wow.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: It's just interesting.

Pat Francois: Surely, yeah. How do you manage balancing your personal life and your work life?

Christine Lewis: It's gotten better. [00:13:30] It's gotten better from, let us say, 25 years ago.

Pat Francois: How that is?

Christine Lewis: Okay. 25 years ago, the kids were smaller. The first job I had in this country, right? The little boy was 9 months. My daughter, it could be more, not 25, because my daughter is 30 ... it could be 26 - 27 years. My daughter was 4 1/2 or 5. [00:14:00] I had to put my daughter in Headstart. In the Bronx side of time. Rely on somebody to put my daughter on the bus, which by the way, the school wasn't in the neighborhood. It was another way away. They used to bus my daughter to school.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

I had to be at work for 7:30 in the morning. Sometimes I ... Listen, I look back now and there's a song that goes like, how I got over. Sometimes I look back and I wonder how I got over.

Pat Francois: [00:14:30] Yes.

Christine Lewis: How did I get over?

Pat Francois: How did you get over?

Christine Lewis: Yeah. Here it is, I'm taking care of this family. Have to be on the job for 8:30, which means I'm leaving the Bronx before 7 o'clock. Showing that my neighbor, put my daughter on the bus to go to school where she was going to school and making sure to take care of this baby who was 9 months old.

Pat Francois: Wow.

Christine Lewis: Wow. The work that we do. I look back and I say, Lord, how did I do it? The Negro [00:15:00] spiritual say, how did I get over? Sometimes I look back and I wonder how I got over because it's not easy for you to put a child 5 years old to send her to early pre-k school. Early head start and go to look at somebody else.

However, we still live as the village. Right? My sister was home. When the school bus came, my nephew who was young at the time could have taken my daughter off the [00:15:30] bus or wait or my sister was home, right? So, that, my daughter could have come into the apartment. Could you imagine?

I look back now and my life belonged to the madam I worked for. It really did. Especially in the early years of my daughter life. I have to be at work at 8:30 and we got into quarrels because here when the trains ... You know how sometimes the trains come an impasse, it stops in the tunnel or it stops for about 20 minutes [00:16:00] or 5 minutes. Most times I would go late and we would attacked.

I would say, lady, just go now. I'm here now, just go to work. Forget that I come late or not. You're starting to quarrel with me, I'm here, just go to the house.

One day she said to me, Christine, well ... I have to also face my employer when I'm late. Which is true too. The train was no fault of my own and by the way, I used to work from ... Listen, I used to work from 8:30 to 10:30.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

[00:16:30] Try going from my village that I had at the time with my daughter growing years.

Pat Francois: Wow.

Christine Lewis: It wasn't easy. The weekends I would get ...

Speaker 3: I'm sorry. I think there's a problem with the mic.

Christine Lewis: Okay. You're not picking up. Did it record some?

Speaker 3: Yeah. It recorded all of that, it's just ...

Christine Lewis: Or something.

Speaker 3: Just ...

Christine Lewis: A little dittle and [qu-el-t 00:16:58].

Speaker 3: [00:17:00] Let me just see that.

Christine Lewis: Oh, the box?

Speaker 3: Yeah.

Christine Lewis: I wonder if it's something I touch when I put it in my pocket?

Pat Francois: [Inaudible 00:17:09].

Christine Lewis: Okay.

Pat Francois: [Inaudible 00:17:09].

Christine Lewis: Yeah.

Speaker 3: Let me take this off.

Christine Lewis: Yeah.

Speaker 3: Sorry. I apologize.

Christine Lewis: Yes.

Speaker 3: Check, check. Can you talk? Say something. I can't get to you, actually.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: It's not mine.

Speaker 3: It's not yours.

Christine Lewis: It's Pats?

Speaker 3: Yeah. Sorry.

Pat Francois: [Inaudible 00:17:42] [00:17:30] .

Christine Lewis: No. I [inaudible 00:17:40].

Speaker 3: I think it's ... I don't know. There's like a hundred things it could be.

Christine Lewis: Okay.

Speaker 3: Okay. You're okay.

Christine Lewis: Right.

Speaker 3: You look good.

Christine Lewis: Right.

Speaker 3: Perfect. I'm sorry. You're good.

Pat Francois: Yeah, I'm good?

Speaker 3: You're good. I'm sorry. The batteries were dying.

Christine Lewis: I see.

Pat Francois: That's [00:18:00] worse sometimes, yeah.

Christine Lewis: Yeah.

Speaker 3: Okay. We're good.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Yeah. What was I going to say last?

Pat Francois: Back to our question which was, how do you manage balance in your personal life and the work life?

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

- Christine Lewis: Right. I was working from 8:30 to 10:30, come on. You don't have a life for your family.
- Pat Francois: How do you balance that?
- Christine Lewis: That's my point. You don't.
- Pat Francois: Where's your time for your daughter?
- Christine Lewis: There was none. I'm telling you. Thank God for the grace of God and the family work-ship. As a matter of fact, [00:18:30] when [Jamie 00:18:30] got older and she would take on that bicycle and ride outside my sister was, one of my sisters was visiting from Trinidad. She would call me and say, Jamie is outside on the bicycle at 8 o'clock.
- I would say to my sister, you're the elder. You are the elder in the house, how could you see her go and I'm not there, take charge.
- Pat Francois: Yes.
- Christine Lewis: You see? I have to rely on the village. Which is my immediate family, who was in the house. Thank God that there was somebody always there, but could you [00:19:00] imagine? That's why I tell ... when I sing these songs, how I get over, I look back and wonder. How I get over? It's really true, especially when you have children.
- Pat Francois: Yes.
- Christine Lewis: It's not easy. I couldn't plan around going somewhere. As a matter of fact, if my job is, let's say, 8:30 - 6:30. My employer could call me and say, Christine, I'm running late or I'm meet some friends for dinner. Here, what, I don't have a life.
- What, do I leave the people's children and go? [00:19:30] Trust me. If that happens Welfare and Social Services and Child ...
- Pat Francois: Look for the Police and jail.
- Christine Lewis: ... Okay. Well, all right. You know this story, right?
- Pat Francois: Yes.
- Christine Lewis: We can't do it.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: So, you're life ... In one of my word that I write, my life belongs to madam on the plantation at easy street.

Pat Francois: Wow.

Christine Lewis: Because it's true too. It was hard to navigate. Now, I'd say, that was 1990. Let's come forward 20, [00:20:00] 25, 2016.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: It's much better. I work from 7:30 to 2:30. So I can do what I want with what I want after.

Pat Francois: Is that consider full time or part time?

Christine Lewis: No. That's full time. Monday through Friday.

Pat Francois: Okay.

Christine Lewis: 7:30 to 2:30, 5 days a week. Oh, yeah. Some Saturdays, if she demands but my point is if I work I could go in, I could make that hour now. If I choose to work on [00:20:30] a Saturday. I could work, I could say I have something to do. That's by my choosing.

If I work 7:30 to 2:30 and they say, could you work overtime? That's overtime. I could navigate, right, because I'm coming home at 2:30. I could stay, meander around the city, and go back to work from 6:30 - 10:30 or 10 o'clock if they need to go somewhere. You know what? It's much easier it's not as grueling and demanding.

Now, if I have somewhere [00:21:00] as a musician to, my second hustle. It could interfere if it's a Saturday and I kind of apply myself, somebody wants me to play out and they want me to work. I have to navigate between which one. Which is feasible, right? Or, am I give them my word and somebody might say, Christine, there's a gig for you here on a Saturday.

Technically, to, it's weaving it around and, again, the capital. You want a dollar. You see what we're up against? [00:21:30] We kind of work paycheck to paycheck. With all that I said, here.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

The nature of the job is that it's really ... overtime, it's a conscionable thing. Yeah?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: It's a conscionable thing but you're working, technically, pay check to pay check. So if you want to [inaudible 00:21:47] struggle, you kind of will work. I'll say, you know what, I'll hang around and I'll work from 6:30 to 10:00 or 9:00 ...

Pat Francois: To make that extra dollar.

Christine Lewis: ... To make a little extra dollar.

Pat Francois: But ...

Christine Lewis: Your life, still now, [00:22:00] doesn't belong to you because if a girlfriend invites me out? Or a boyfriend invites me out? You know?

Pat Francois: When you work overtime, do you get time and a half?

Christine Lewis: You know, I wouldn't say that. I'll get overtime but I wouldn't say time and a half. Really.

Pat Francois: Are you entitled to time and a half once you work overtime? You [00:22:30] go overtime. Once you say overtime...

Christine Lewis: So, should I ask ... Answer this question...

Pat Francois: ... My understanding is time and a half.

Christine Lewis: Is it on holiday as though that this time and a half as opposed to in the day when you work, overtime?

Pat Francois: As long as it's overtime, my understanding ...

Christine Lewis: Is time and a half?

Pat Francois: ... Is time and a half.

Christine Lewis: I just got overtime.

Pat Francois: I can do a little more research but I know as long as you work overtime, that is time and a half.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: Okay.

Pat Francois: Because that is not the regular hours anymore. [00:23:00] It going beyond your regular hours. Be it the same day, if it's a week day. Be it if it's the weekend.

Christine Lewis: I think more weekend to, could be time and a half. Right?

Pat Francois: Time and a half, overtime.

Christine Lewis: Regardless.

Pat Francois: I went through the Domestic Workers United bill and time and a half, is once you work overtime.

Christine Lewis: Okay.

Pat Francois: Be it Monday, be it Friday, be it Sunday.

Christine Lewis: I will get the overtime. I never checked that.

Pat Francois: But you must look [00:23:30] into it.

Christine Lewis: Yeah. I never checked that but I get overtime. I know that when it come a day that's a holiday, like, let us Martin Luther King or Memorial Day and I work that day. It's established...

Pat Francois: The hours is time and a half.

Christine Lewis: Yeah ... and a half because you work a holiday.

Pat Francois: Yes. It is established those hours is time and a half. Even if it would be on the time that they ask you to work, it's time and a half.

Christine Lewis: Okay. I get just overtime.

Pat Francois: Weekday, your regular hours. Regular pay.

Christine Lewis: [00:24:00] Yeah.

Pat Francois: All for that, over those regular hours. Like it would 44 hours and it would go up 44 hours, those are the 4 hours, my understanding, is time and a half because it's overtime.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: Okay.

Pat Francois: You go even when you don't work on a Sunday, you're going to work on a Sunday, your whole pay is time and a half.

Christine Lewis: ...And a half. I must say, that they're pretty generous. That's why I say, it's a conscionable thing. Even if you don't get that by law and we know the Bill of Rights, what the Bill of Rights meant. [00:24:30] I think we'll get to that. It's a conscionable thing.

Pat Francois: Conscionable thing. Yes. I would agree.

Christine Lewis: I use that all the time. You know what? I put in my wages, I put in my time, do right by me. I don't have to go back to them and say, well you know something? You stiff me or you short me. If the need comes to be, I will do that because I'm good at that. I'm really good at that. What you brings me, let me segway off the conversation a little bit.

My lady would always ask, [00:25:00] the first time when I started to work as we talk about the time and a half and how much, you know ... as you talk about your life, if it belongs to you and the things that I feel. When I started to work she would say, Christine, did you see ... what it was? The first thing was ... the dab brush. What do you call it? The eyebrow brush, right? Is it the eyebrow brush?

Pat Francois: Yes. You put them on like that.

Christine Lewis: No. [00:25:30] They are two in right ... Did you see my? How do you call it? Eye brow brush line?

Pat Francois: Eye liner.

Christine Lewis: Eye liner brush. No. The dab brush.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: The one with the sponge, the little sponge. Listen, you could them by Rite Aid 20 and a pack for one dollar. Right? You know what I'm talking about right?

Pat Francois: Yes, I know.

Christine Lewis: Well, they put it on this little blue thing, you dab the brush. The little brush.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Anyhow, hers was ... It had, I think a Rite Aid ad to, hers was, it had a little metal. [00:26:00] You know, some of them have the little metal in the middle.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: But I really did see it but I didn't think nothing of it because, I don't want your brush.

Pat Francois: Okay.

Christine Lewis: I think it was rather rambunctious when she asked that. Did you see that, my eyebrow thing? I don't know if was because she noticed I have my little eyeliner to. Well, we could see that.

A couple weeks ago, she come back and she ask, did you see the babies teething necklace? This was new to [00:26:30] me. The babies teething necklace. Number one, the baby shouldn't have on no teething necklace because the baby could pull off the teething necklace and put it in his mouth. Right?

Now, I don't know what the babies teething necklace supposed to do. That new, right?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: We know from the Caribbean it's either that spongy icy thing for the babies teeth which...

Pat Francois: For the gum.

Christine Lewis: ... Will kind of alleviate and relieve the pain. Right? [00:27:00] That all a pumpkin stem.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: You know, the old homeopathic thing?

Pat Francois: Yes.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: This one is all relatively new to me. The babies teething necklace. It's really a necklace. With beads. Apparently the energy from the beads is my kind of...

Pat Francois: To stimulate the mouth?

Christine Lewis: ... I don't understand all that work anyhow? That was one thing. Then she come back and ask, did you see the baby's air thermometer. That was one thing to, right?

[00:27:30] Then, the next day, she looking really frantically for her iPad. Her tablet. She's looking in her bag and she's looking in her bag frantically. This starting to piss me off now, right? The little girl say, Christine, you maybe have it? You maybe have the tablet? So, I couldn't take it no more.

Some Fridays ago, I went to [inaudible 00:27:53] something. She said to me, I'm coming ... I said, I'm supposed to start work 7:30. What she said to [00:28:00] me is that I'm coming a little late. She has to be at work. I say, well, when I'm coming to you it's really not on me that I'm late. Sometimes the train stay in the tunnel.

You know traffics in the morning, that time, 7:30 minutes to 8:00 ... I leave home. I strive to get on the 6:41 train which will bring me into the city for 7:30. [00:28:30] Right? Anyway, the trains kind of delayed because of the traffic.

She said to me, strive to come early. I said, this one was [inaudible 00:28:39] that Friday. I said, by the way. Let me tell you something about ... I find you asking me too often if I seen this, that and the other.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: You know why I'm do it? I'm standing up for women, right? And my talk has to be in accordance with [00:29:00] my walk, right?

Pat Francois: Yeah.

Christine Lewis: If I'm standing up for women, who comes to meeting at Domestic Workers United? After standing for myself, it begins with me. I say, listen to me. It's making me a little uncomfortable because my charge is your son and everything that's immediately around your son. His pampers, his pacifiers, his shoes. I said, you know what? Babies lose shoes, they lose pacifiers, they lose bib, they lose [00:29:30] hats ...

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: Yes, they do.

Christine Lewis: They lose toys along the way when they're pushing them. I say, but you're asking me too often if I find this, that and the other. She say, am I blaming you? I say, you know what? I'm not giving it a label but too often you're asking me now if I see this, if I see that. She say, do you think that I'm accusing your or blaming you?

I say, I'm not giving it a label. I'm not giving it a hand, let's leave it alone. For some reason, I can't say why I say this, I say we [00:30:00] are up ... I don't know why I use we, we are up against so much. I don't know if I was speaking for a movement at that time. Not that they know that I'm organizing because my organizing has nothing to do with me on the job.

I say, we are up against so much. Then I said, I hereby [inaudible 00:30:17], I'll tell you one day. For the first ... not for the first time, I've done it more than once. I felt so liberated for us as a movement because the power of one, being able to say to your employer. Do you know how many people are afraid to say what I said [00:30:30] for fear of a job?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: The job is a dime a dozen.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Women are lining up to get babysitting jobs in 2016. Three and four people going on one job or 75 people going on one job. In a day. Just to answer back your employer, or say to her, you know ... In other words, stop it already. You're bugging me about this thing.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: These are the things that we're up against. I am against. As you talk about life interrupted and your job. The things that you suffer on your [00:31:00] job, just to make a dollar. I just have to share that.

I don't want your eyebrow pencil. I don't want the baby's thermometer. I don't want your tablet, I have a tablet and a phone.

Pat Francois: Right.

Christine Lewis: You understand me? When we go there we go to work. Oh! To top it off I said to her, when you hired me, I don't want to start conflict. I believe in

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

communication. When you hired me, you hired somebody with integrity and character.

Pat Francois: Good.

Christine Lewis: [00:31:30] I think she was a little stunned when I said that. Integrity and character.

Pat Francois: [Crosstalk 00:31:33] right ...

Christine Lewis: It speak volume. Integrity and character, tells you the kind of person that I am. I don't want your stuff.

It's shuffling life in the home that we work for. All the things that we have to deal with apart from the trains being late, apart from taking care of my child and taking care of another child and having to navigate days off and what do I do with those days off or [00:32:00] working around the clock. I can't be there for my daughter.

When weekend came in, I had to take my daughter to the bookstore. I had to read to her hard, I had to take her to book read-ins because I have belonged to a book store that would have book read-ins. I had to do things twice as hard because we're tired. We're burnt out.

Pat Francois: Mhm (affirmative).

Christine Lewis: You understand? You know what I've discovered as I get older? Child care and child rearing is not easy work.

Pat Francois: It's real work.

Christine Lewis: Listen, when I bend down to put that [00:32:30] pamper on that baby I could feel my back. To interact with a baby, constantly, but the laugh of the children. It's not easy. Child care is not no easy work. You talk about light housekeeping and I could go light housekeeping.

Pat Francois: Or housekeeping.

Christine Lewis: You're taking care of a house if you're taking care of a house.

Pat Francois: Real housekeeping.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: Let me tell you something, you're not doing [inaudible 00:32:48]. I know I wanted to eat off that plate, I had to wash it damn good. Could I say damn good on TV?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: I had to wash it damn good because if I slip up, [00:33:00] I had to go back and use that same plate. So, I do the best that I could. All jobs are good.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: So, I do the best that I could.

Pat Francois: Even with the challenges?

Christine Lewis: How you mean? It reflects though. You have to do it right or don't do it.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: That's why I said to babysitters, if the people getting on your last nerve get out of the job. It's not good for you and do it good. Know when it's time to leave. If it's becoming a bore...

Pat Francois: A burden.

Christine Lewis: ... and a burden, get out of that job [00:33:30] because the kids ... By the way...

Pat Francois: There's no growth in a job like that. No growth.

Christine Lewis: ... No growth. By the way, it's not the babies. It's the parents. That's why I ask them when I go on the job, are you anxious? Are you an anxious parent? Especially parents with first children. It's easy to become anxious.

When I come to the job, I not coming with doctor leash book, right?

Pat Francois: No.

Christine Lewis: I come in with what you call mothers wit. I've raised a daughter. She's 30.

Pat Francois: Yes.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

- Christine Lewis: When I come in, I come in. She had no accidents. [00:34:00] No emergencies, no nothing and she's 30. She's a woman herself.
- When I come in, I come in with experience, mother's wit. You can't pay for that. Don't tell me how to put the child pamper on the child bumbum or the child tush.
- Pat Francois: Imagine that.
- Christine Lewis: Yeah. Don't tell me how to put the milk in the baby bottle. Don't tell me that there's food on the stove, I can cook the food.
- Pat Francois: After being a mother of 30 years.
- Christine Lewis: For so many years. Yeah. I understand the anxious. It's not the babies, when you look at the babies, [00:34:30] they're so helpless.
- Pat Francois: Yes. In a sense.
- Christine Lewis: They're looking forward to your love, your unconditional love. I am trusting myself to love that child when that parent is not there because I replace that mother.
- Pat Francois: Yes.
- Christine Lewis: I'm not the mother or the father but I'm paid to care for that child. Why not do it the best that I could?
- Pat Francois: Yes. I agree.
- Christine Lewis: According to you, on all the challenges, as loveless as some of these people can be. Again, as loveless and more so deeming that that work is inferior work [00:35:00] and is designated for women of color. It's beyond that.
- Pat Francois: Beyond. Way beyond that.
- Christine Lewis: Way beyond that. Bring another question.
- Pat Francois: It's the future.
- Christine Lewis: Yep. That's my point. We could go on and on because from a place of [a gap-ay 00:35:12] love, unconditional love. You look the children in the eyes, you know what I'm talking about. Right?

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: I sure do.

Christine Lewis: You watch your children you work for and you what, the child defies scream out ... You get cussed for giving your child an ice cream. Right?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: But you give the child the ice cream. How could you not?

Pat Francois: I give the child anyway.

Christine Lewis: You give the [00:35:30] child anyway.

Pat Francois: Out of the motherly love we have for these children.

Christine Lewis: Yeah.

Pat Francois: Yes. How does being an Domestic Worker impact your own family life?

Christine Lewis: How does it impact...? When my daughter has gone off to Canada. In other words, I really don't have a family life. If I would say anything at all to that question, it's that the work that I do as an organizer on behalf of DWU could take me away from my [00:36:00] partner. I'm so ... The story becomes our story.

We live the story. We are the Domestic Workers and standing up on the front line for Domestic Worker and the passion that I bring to it could take me away from my relationships.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: So, it impacts ...

Pat Francois: It impacts on your personal ...

Christine Lewis: Yeah. Not the domestic word because I don't have a family per se.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: My life is lived through activism [00:36:30] and Domestic Workers United, going to events. I have nobody to answer to. My partner kind of say, I'm over here but making sure that movement move. The life of an activist takes you away sometime. It's like a blinder. Okay, I'm over here.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Come on, I don't go to parties ... I don't really. We don't go out, right? Everything is centered around Domestic ...

Pat Francois: Domestic [00:37:00] word and work.

Christine Lewis: Yeah. Back then though, I'll say in the early 90's, it impacted in that. You really couldn't spend time with your family as you wanted to. I couldn't be there to put my daughter on the bus. I had to rely on these little girls, give them a stipend to walk my daughter to school. At that time, those children who used to work ... those young high school children, whose brothers was the same age as my daughter Jamie.

I used to rely on them to walk Jamie to school. Those things I couldn't [00:37:30] do. I'm coming back late, so I really couldn't ... I come home in time to do her homework. But really, to walk in the park, the way I would take these children to the park.

Pat Francois: That little leisure time.

Christine Lewis: Yeah. It was mines. It does a number because you're not there to raise yours. You're raising other people's children. It puts a dent.

Your life belongs over there, not at your house.

Pat Francois: Yes. Sometimes some of them have a nerve, I remember. I just so seen that, I had an employer tell her, now [00:38:00] get a life.

Christine Lewis: Okay. How?

Pat Francois: When her life just evolve around your life.

Christine Lewis: Interestingly, you should say that. I remember on holidays, when I didn't ... again, the cultural differences. When I didn't realize, when I just come to the states. I didn't realize that Memorial Weekend was a holiday. An American holiday.

I'm not talking for doctors and nurses, right? On call workers or those who do that type of job but for us as workers. IT was a holiday. Labor Day. I catch myself working.

By [00:38:30] the way, Labor Day in Brooklyn is our Caribbean holiday. It's a time we get to hobnob with your friends and family from abroad.

Pat Francois: Yes.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: Your good friends who you haven't seen ...

Pat Francois: Who you haven't seen for a year.

Christine Lewis: ... Many years. People don't come into town. When I work that Labor Day. I say, wow. My father was in town, I couldn't spend time with my father.

Pat Francois: That was so wrong!

Christine Lewis: It was so wrong! But wait, hold up. One better. The next year on Memorial [00:39:00] Day, didn't catch me working, neither Labor Day. My employer say, well who tell you? I say, but you know it's a holiday. You and I know its holidays, right?

It's funny that, as you you talk about how it impact ... the times that you could spend with your loved ones, you don't get that time and they don't come back again.

Pat Francois: Mhm (affirmative).

Christine Lewis: Your family is visiting. My father. I remember working from a Wednesday to a Sunday and my father was here from Trinidad.

Pat Francois: You could not visit to him.

Christine Lewis: I [00:39:30] couldn't spend time with him. It was a weekend.

Pat Francois: That was heartbreaking to know that after all these ...

Christine Lewis: When's [crosstalk 00:39:34] ...

Pat Francois: ... years, and your father come to visit you and you can't spend time with you.

Christine Lewis: We come weekend. When they got in Brooklyn to have their social events, I couldn't be a part of it because I was working from 8:00 to 8:00.

Pat Francois: Wow.

Christine Lewis: I was working from, listen, I was working from 8:00 to 8:00. This woman worked in television, she was a producer for CNN or MSNBC and one of them. She would not allow me to go home at 6 o'clock. I'm starting work

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

[00:40:00] at 8:30. She would come inside, she would come ... she was going to work from 10:00 to 6:00.

Yeah, the logic is right. She was going to work from 10:00 to 6:00. I would be with her little boy from 8:30 to 8:00. What she used to do because she was a TV aficionado, she would go in her room and look at her [ollie golly 00:40:20] TV shows because it's what she did. From 6 o'clock, she would take her food and [00:40:30] everything and go into her bedroom. I would stay with the little boy until 8:30. That's 12 hours, right?

Pat Francois: Wow.

Christine Lewis: Yeah. Long hours.

Pat Francois: Wow.

Christine Lewis: What kept me there, what really kept me there, the little boy was a Caribbean abductee. His mother came from, I think was Jamaican, and this woman had the money and she adopted him.

Pat Francois: Okay.

Christine Lewis: I felt for him as a Caribbean woman. He grew on me, like a son to a mother.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: [00:41:00] That's the only reason. I leave the job too, in the end, I really have to leave the job. There was no time to spend with nobody.

Pat Francois: I know, right?

Christine Lewis: That job ...

Pat Francois: You would say, you really didn't have a life.

Christine Lewis: No. 8:30 - 8:30. From Wednesday to Sunday. My day off was Monday and Tuesday. There was a day ... You know when I realize I have to leave that job? I started to write about the job, it was a Wednesday and I was supposed to go back to work. Instead [00:41:30] of going back to work, I didn't call her. I started to write that morning. I got up early, I remember crying writing and that was the end.

She call, I never answer the phone.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: No, right.

Christine Lewis: You know something? It would have been my loss anyway because in the end she packed up and moved to Atlanta, Georgia. She was going to Atlanta, Georgia not alerting me.

Pat Francois: You take [crosstalk 00:41:51] ...

Christine Lewis: Surrender [crosstalk 00:41:53] providence.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: I decided to stay home. The love we give to the children, the little boy I fell for. [00:42:00] His mother was Caribbean, she was young, relatively young and she adopted him and I fell for him.

Pat Francois: Are you a member of another organizational group?

Christine Lewis: No. Am I?

Pat Francois: Organization group, like, do you affiliated ... I understand that you have affiliation at the Public Theater.

Christine Lewis: That will come up within ... [00:42:30] No. Other than that, no. I did [inaudible 00:42:33] Domestic Workers United. That is what takes my ...

Pat Francois: Full fledge.

Christine Lewis: ... Yes. Full fledge.

Pat Francois: Right. Well. You are doing Domestic Work. Do you feel supported or have you felt like you are working in an isolated environment?

Christine Lewis: You know something, time go for organizing that I don't feel that way. In the early days I would feel that way as I [00:43:00] aforementioned. You know, the times that you couldn't spend with your family. The times that you work from sun up to sun down, 8:30 AM - 8:30 PM, you didn't have a life. Yeah, if you [inaudible 00:43:16] on me because I couldn't spend the time I want with my daughter. The quality time with my daughter at that age, I couldn't spend it with family and friends.

There were things that were happening in the Bronx where I was living, there were things happening in Brooklyn. I couldn't belong to the pianist sides as I wanted to.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: Okay. You're a pianist [00:43:30] as well?

Christine Lewis: Yeah. I'm a pianist as well. It take from you having, really, because ... again, I can't reiterate this on fast and furious, your life, the nature of the job is that your life and all that you give belong to the family except yours.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: So, yes. It could be a lonely feeling but then go the comradery of Domestic Workers United. Have me having something to look forward to when I come off the job but it could be an isolated place. It's not in an environment [00:44:00] where you have 5 or 6 other workers, you could talk across the board. You just have this baby.

Yeah, you could talk to the baby. You could play with the baby, you could laugh with the baby, you could make silly gestures with a baby because they're babies. Other than that, when you're working on a weekend and you're especially ... there's something in Brooklyn. Labor Day or Memorial weekend or if you're living in ... I mean, by that time you get used to it. But you can never get used to your own bed. You know that?

Your own [00:44:30] bed, when night come, you want to go in your own bed.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Your own cheesy comforter, your own cheesy pillow. It's yours.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: What's so funny?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Yeah. You want to go on your own ...

Pat Francois: It's yours.

Christine Lewis: Even if it have a hole in the middle of the thing, it's yours because you know what, you really can't turn the way you want to turn in somebodies house. If you want to pass gas, you had to think twice.

Pat Francois: Yes.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: You know? [Crosstalk 00:44:57] ...

Pat Francois: Make yourself more sick.

Christine Lewis: [00:45:00] Yeah. You're isolated. You're isolated. Depending on what ... I remember working, listen, you think I have stories. I remember working in Tarrytown. Sleepy Hallows, is really Sleepy Hallows in every sense of the word upstate New York. In every sense of the word it's Sleep Hallow. You hear what I'm telling you?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: I work for 3 kids and their parents. To go to where I was working, oh my god, [00:45:30] let me tell you again how I got over the legal spiritual. Of him. How I got over, sometimes I look back and wonder, how I got over. That's why I write.

You have to go in, like, a wooded area to get to this log cabin house. It was an old jazz house, from what I understand.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: You get off that bus and to walk in there is so lonely. We had all that shrub and bush as this house.

Pat Francois: Wow.

Christine Lewis: Same thing in the night, have to walk back out. No [00:46:00] kind bringing you out of this place right. I work in there, 3 days a week for \$60 dollars in 1990. I thought that was money.

Pat Francois: Wow.

Christine Lewis: 3 days with these kids. I love the children.

Pat Francois: 3 whole days ...

Christine Lewis: Something about ...

Pat Francois: ... for \$60 dollars?

Christine Lewis: ... Yeah. Say we again ...

Pat Francois: Wait, ma'am. Wait. Is it \$60 a day, you're mixing it up?

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: \$60 dollars a week, for 3 days. Not a day.

Pat Francois: Really?

Christine Lewis: 3 days.

Pat Francois: What you're [00:46:30] saying is, that was beyond exploitation because ...

Christine Lewis: \$60 a day? No, man. It's \$60 a week. Yeah, it was. But again, you didn't know ... listen ...

Pat Francois: \$60 dollars a week. You're talking about taking care of 3 kids.

Christine Lewis: Yeah. But listen to me ...

Pat Francois: Otherwise you're watching them for \$2 dollars an hour or something like that.

Christine Lewis: Yeah. So, hold on. You didn't know the currency, right?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: The value. You know the US dollar is more, right?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: But \$60 dollars, to you, in your mind, is part time, was plenty money. Wait. Apart from [00:47:00] the exploit, but I didn't know better. There was no school to me, you're [inaudible 00:47:03] jobs you get, they exploit.

Pat Francois: At the point, at that time, no DWU.

Christine Lewis: No, DWU. There you go. No, DWU. You're glad for the money, you're just [CA 00:47:13] you got to make a way, a life, for yourself and your kid. But the bullshit I had to go through to get their house. Mind you, in Tarrytown, Sleepy Hallow I had to make sure and get on the 7:15 bus. If I don't get on the 7:15 bus, [00:47:30] dog eat my supper.

I don't know how I was getting out of that town. The last bus stops at 7:50.

Pat Francois: Wow.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: Comes in at 7:50. After that you're your own. I had to try to make that bus. You talk about being lonely because you know you look into the window, you don't know who hiding in these bushes.

Pat Francois: Let me ask you one question, when you leaving that house, they never offered to drop you to that train station or that [00:48:00] bus stop?

Christine Lewis: Mm-m (negative).

Pat Francois: They had a car?

Christine Lewis: Yeah. Well, it was a strange family, yeah? It was a kind of strange family, too. Interesting.

Pat Francois: Wow.

Christine Lewis: Funny enough, the three children grew on me again. The three children grew on me, they were different. Their house was an interesting kind of look, cabin kind of house. I don't know if they had money, I don't know if it was ... you know, wealthy folks or non-wealthy folks. I don't know but it was like a story book kind of set up. The children [00:48:30] grew on me.

Mind you, that'll jump to, then last as long as the Red House fire. It didn't last long.

Pat Francois: I see.

Christine Lewis: Yeah. The things we do, right? Was \$60 dollar ... I remember cleaning the house, preparing meals for the children and them coming to sit at the table to eat. They just grew on me.

Pat Francois: So, you stay living for those 3 days?

Christine Lewis: No, no, no.

Pat Francois: Okay.

Christine Lewis: I think I used to go late evening [00:49:00] and work until 7 ... It wasn't all day. I think I might go around, get in there for 3:00 or 1:00 o'clock and work until 7:00 o'clock. To walk outside, to get to the bus stop by 7:00.

Pat Francois: How are you is to get out of that bush stone?

Christine Lewis: I had to walk out, wait and stand by the bus.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: Alone?

Christine Lewis: Alone. Well, clearly there were one or two people ...

Pat Francois: Other workers?

Christine Lewis: ... Yeah. Who were coming from, not like New York, where it's populated.

Pat Francois: Right.

Christine Lewis: You get in the park you see the workers. Out there [00:49:30] kind of pinpoint, you saw the black women and you know they're coming there to work. We had to by the bus stop and trade stories but it was not too much stories because these people were new to me and I was new to this situation.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: \$60 dollars for 3 days. That I remember.

Pat Francois: Okay. Let's go on ...

Christine Lewis: Vividly.

Pat Francois: ... Let's go on a little further now. When and why did you become part of DWU (Domestic Workers United)? How did you hear about it?

Christine Lewis: Okay. [00:50:00] I was doing some field studies at NYU at the time, right? That was in 2001. Domestic Workers United was born in 2000. In 2001, I was told about it a long time ago but I was finishing these classes at NYU. A friend said to me, Christine, you would make a good spokesperson or a good person for the movement.

I joined the movement from 2001 and I never looked back. But why not though?

Pat Francois: Why [00:50:30] not?

Christine Lewis: That's the question.

Pat Francois: For a good cause.

Christine Lewis: Well, we are the worker.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: [Crosstalk 00:50:34] ...

Christine Lewis: Here in the history of America women have been organizing for ages. Black women has been organizing, we look at the face of Domestic Work and farm workers, they were black men and women. Slaves, if you may. 1920's and the 1930's the people in the South started to come to the North to work. Yeah?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: The job demography [00:51:00] changed. In the 20's people were changing vastly. Our Caribbean folks they were going to England, they were going to the Americas.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: When I came here and being in the park playground in 1990, women would ask me. Who do we go to? So long before DWU was born, women were asking me, who do we go to when are faced with this? This friend said to me, this man just come up on me and he blow smoke, he do like this ... [00:51:30] in my face. She said, Christine, who do we go to?

We was just huddling on that park playground on 95th street. We used to talk about our situation and conditions. This girl was working for this Jewish family and, again, we talk about food. Fridays the Sabbath right or sundown or whatever it is. Again, cultural ...

Pat Francois: Holiday.

Christine Lewis: ... Cultural nuance.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Mustn't give the child a bologna and she didn't hear the end of [00:52:00] it from his parents. Not knowing that it wasn't kosher meat or whatever it is. All she know is she give the child this treat and she get a cussing from this man. We would sit out and say, who do we go to?

Tell me as later there was a Domestic Workers United. For years this was in the stratosphere, it was in the atmosphere. I jumped on board, as a speaker for the movement, as a laborer for the movement [00:52:30] because it's our story.

Pat Francois: Yes.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: It is us when we're underpaid and overworked. It's us when our employers say I'm making my way home but I'm having a cup of coffee or a glass of wine with my friend and I really want to go home to my daughter, why should us not make it different for people who come along.

For years black women have been organizing. For years this job has been deemed inferior, right? They can do what they want. For yellow make a segregation as slow [00:53:00] making then put their hand right into the job, pompous-fully because it was [inaudible 00:53:04] because who decide that Domestic Workers and Farm Workers shouldn't get a Bill of Rights.

Pat Francois: Sure.

Christine Lewis: Who decides that? The National Labor Relation have been excluded, yet the quality, the caliber of work for other workers was able to get the Bill on their books except Domestic Worker because it was historically done by black folks. Keep them out of the law. Sad.

Pat Francois: After what [00:53:30] you just said here now. What has it meant for you and your work that a Domestic Bill of Rights, passed in 2010?

Christine Lewis: End an era of exclusion. Women could come out of the wood work now. There's no more fear. Now you can speak your piece, speak true to power and speak your truth and speak it clearly. Say what you're working for and not working for.

[00:54:00] By the way, in me saying this, there are women who still can't assert their rights because they know they need this job ASAP as of yesterday.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: They know that they got this job and when they got this job, there was 75 people before them ...

Pat Francois: Waiting for the same job.

Christine Lewis: ... You know how I know this? Because it was I. I remember when I, Truly Irish, I go at the time ... When I was trying to look for job, I went through the Irish [inaudible 00:54:25] when I got a job and the woman tell me, she say, I remember saying to her vividly. [00:54:30] If I'm the last person

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

to come for this interview, let me be the first to get a job and so it was. I got the job.

She said to me, she reminded me, she said Christine, is 75 people I saw. You hear what I'm telling you? It's the same thing that's happening today.

For 1 babysitter job, this person must have seen 10 people. That's why they say, we'll get back to you because they're still interviewing. May the best one win, whoever is that best one win. When that Bill of Rights was passed [00:55:00] in 2010 it brought women out of the shadows.

It brought us out of the shadows. It's a little win but women could have assert their rights now when the job please.

Pat Francois: In a nutshell, it brought us out of exclusion.

Christine Lewis: Of course. It ended an era of exclusion. No! It's still in saying that, there are people who still with their individual employers who not doing the right thing. You're still in the shadow but the idea [00:55:30] of it is, here it is. We have an anchor, we have a safety net.

Pat Francois: That's right.

Christine Lewis: That if women feel that they're being stiffed, they could come to Domestic Workers United. There's a place for us, there's a sisterhood, there is a comradery, there is comradeship. Yeah. If you me.

Nowhere to hide now.

Pat Francois: What would you like to see happen in the future with a Bill of Rights?

Christine Lewis: An extension of the Bill of Rights. Those things that were chiseled off the Bill of [00:56:00] Rights. Like paid sick days and when firing, employers could come and tell you tomorrow, give me back the keys. Give me my keys. Not even tell you, tell the doorman, to take the keys from you when you come the next week.

Sick days, with pay.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: No longer 2 weeks, you don't work but you get paid. You're not sick and you're feeling well, you should be paid. All those things need to be back in the bill. It's not just after 40 hours overtime and 44 hours live-in

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

overtime. [00:56:30] Everybody got that! Every working sector get that or discrimination. What does that mean?

Or 3 days off per year. We need a little more. We need something more tangible than that because you could to work today or not feel well tomorrow and go to work and not get paid. You got to pay us, you got to pay for your health insurance. Especially if you don't have health insurance. Those things added on to the Bill of Rights.

We need a little more. The journey now begin babes, we still have to go back [00:57:00] to the table, the drawing board, the legislatures. Yeah.

Pat Francois: Also, would you add to this question ... what would you like to see in the future is that employers really respect that bill and follow that bill with [crosstalk 00:57:19]?

Christine Lewis: Of course. The Department of Labor establish those conversations.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Education for our worker, to empower them. To tell them, it's not a [00:57:30] shame because I was she. It wasn't what I live Trinidad to do. I was a literacy teacher, a head start teacher, a musician, a dancer, everything. I went to school for the arts, we're more than that.

A shame, the stigma of the inferiority of the job. Why do you think some women wouldn't come to Domestic Workers United? They hate the word domestic.

Pat Francois: The fear.

Christine Lewis: I hated it too. The Latino sisters would say to you, domestic is cats and dogs.

Pat Francois: Domesticated.

Christine Lewis: Domesticated. Domestic is cats and dog. We found the [00:58:00] virtue of the Domestic Worker because you know what? When I was growing up, my parents were working class people. We had people who came to see about us. Who combed my hair, who made sure my clothes was ironed.

I didn't think when I leave Trinidad, I would come and work in somebodies home or care for somebodies baby. By the way, the article in

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Trinidad newspaper, before I leave Trinidad was, do you know ... I'm talking for Trinidad young women, I don't know what the other people would see. Do you know what Trinidadian women are selling their [00:58:30] house and land to go to America to do? Walk peoples baby on the upper west side.

There it was. In the [inaudible 00:58:34] it was me. I read up [donkey 00:58:37] years ago.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: The shame that is attached to Domestic Work. As I look back and the cloud to get from below into a movement, is that all work is good. The Father created the Universe and when he created the Universe what did he say? The seven days that his creation in the [inaudible 00:58:54] of men, he said was good.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Doctor Martin [00:59:00] Luther King, say for [inaudible 00:58:58] the dream, be the best at what you can do. Trust me. When I work for the children that I work for, I do the best that I could. You know what is my joie de vivre? Let me tell you what is my joie de vivre.

When the mother comes home and this little boy, he is holding onto his mother but he is looking around for Christine, with a beautiful smile on his face. The mother don't even have to ask him how his day was. The smile tells it.

The treatment he gets when she's not there, [00:59:30] I treat him as my own. How could you not love innocence? Yeah. This Bill of Rights, who doesn't recompense me for the love? You can't pay for unconditional love. I wish sometimes that these people would look at the work that we do for loving a child, for taking care of your home.

Making sure that when you come back, this child is scratch less. He does not have a mark on his thigh but he is just happy.

Pat Francois: Just happy. Yes.

Christine Lewis: They make the job difficult. So, yes. [01:00:00] This bill is personal days, hell days, get paid if you're not well and if you had to stay at the hospital, and know that, you know what, you could get a sick check somewhere in the mail. We need more.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

We need a little more than the three items that we're good at. I would line the three items. Which is after 40 hours overtime, if you're living after 44 hours overtime. [01:00:30] 3 days off per year, that is not enough.

Pat Francois: It isn't.

Christine Lewis: A bill against harassment from discrimination, sex exploitation.

Pat Francois: Sexual harassment. Yes.

Christine Lewis: That is a given because if somebody propositioned you on the job, and the propositioned wrongly, you know what to do. That's a given.

Pat Francois: Sexual harassment. Yes.

Christine Lewis: It's an old job. Things like personal days, sick days and education. Being able to educate more [01:01:00] women, is high on my list.

Pat Francois: I hear you mentioned how important Domestic Workers United is. Right? But from your personal perspective, could you give me a little more?

Christine Lewis: About how important it is?

Pat Francois: How important for Domestic Work, your perspective, DW, how important it is for them.

Christine Lewis: To tell you stories.

Aurora Levins Morales. [01:01:30] I say this like a decimal. I say it over and over. You hear me say it over and over. Aurora Levins Morales, I think she's a Jewish / Puerto Rican writer. She said that our stories are our medicine.

When we meet in this space, Domestic Workers United, women can talk about what they went through and know that they have a friend who has been through it.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Who can stand with them. Who is there to listen to their stories [01:02:00] in a non judgement kind of way. Domestic Workers, it matters in the history of America. By the way, this is big big, because this Bill of

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Rights was passed in New York in 2010. Which, by the way, was a model for other states to go after their Bill of Rights.

So, it's big big.

Pat Francois: Set the precedence.

Christine Lewis: Of course. So, we have CPR class, we have nannies training courses.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Women call this phone very often to find out, what education they can come and be a part of?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Just to [01:02:30] belong to and know that we have legal representation. If you feel like your wages have been stiffed by your employer, you have a recourse. We call the Urban Justice Center, if they feel that you have a case on a situation, they will take it pro-bono. Why should we not belong?

Pat Francois: What you're saying is Domestic Workers United is in partnership with Urban Justice Center the legal clinic?

Christine Lewis: Of course.

Pat Francois: Good for Domestic Workers United.

Christine Lewis: Of course!

Pat Francois: Good for Domestic [01:03:00] Workers.

Christine Lewis: Of course! They must know that they have these rights to. They might not what to come to meeting but when I meet them in the packs and I outline to them, I say, I'm giving you this flyer. I'm telling you my name, I'm telling you what I do. It's on you.

If you don't want the flyer, pass it along because sooner or later it might be your story. Just sitting, congregating, fellowship. You know what church look like to me one Saturday the month, this is what church looks like.

Pat Francois: [Inaudible 01:03:25].

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: Jesus Christ take over [inaudible 01:03:28] for black [01:03:30] women, because black women [foreign audio] we don't have money to tie but here, this song we will sing.

My Jesus and I, we have a good thing going on. My Jesus and I, we have a good thing going on. They're singing this song, we singing this song. In spite, as you say, before the challenges we're wage theft but we believe in a God who will make it right for us.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: We're abused on the job [01:04:00] and now we have a place to come to, that takes us out of the shadow and puts us into the marvelous light. Let women know that we have a place that you can no longer cry in silence. Whether you're working in Westchester County, whether you're working in Sag Harbor, you have a place to come to so you're not alone.

Our jobs is isolated jobs.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: I'm talking about Long Island, Sag Harbor, [01:04:30] The Hamptons. When you go there on a Holiday with your employer, it's just you alone, when your employer go to those fancy eateries and restaurants in The Hamptons you are left alone with his children to care for them. You don't have your family.

Number one, you're sole provider. Number two, when you rely on your husband to be faithful. He might not be faithful because it's 2 - 3 weeks you're living in.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Let's talk about that. Let's [01:05:00] talk about how we jail our employers relationship. How we jail it. Our employers and husband and wife might be having their spat but when we stay and then work late for them to go and have a cup of coffee or have a glass of wine, they're improving on their marriages while our husbands are walking away.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: While our children are standing right there in this [inaudible 01:05:18] Heights neighborhood, dying by gun violence because we're not in the

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

home. We're 2 and 3 jobs to make it and to help send them to college.  
[01:05:30] Keep a roof ...

Pat Francois: Keep a roof over their head. Clothes on their back. Food in their tummy.

Christine Lewis: Let me share my example. It was I.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: It was I. I was evicted with my dog because that day that I didn't work. It was my story. Rico has said to me, you have to tell this story and over and over? Yes, I have to tell it over and over. You know why I have to tell it? To encourage a sister who come here. To encourage somebody who walks into this room, to tell them there's a way because here, what, somebody [01:06:00] reach out to me in my hour of need.

I had my dog was outside my apartment but I was holding up a movement. Believing in the movement, it wasn't the church. I love to go to church, I love to congregate because we're not to forsake the assembling of the churches. Black women, we're at the bottom of the totem poles, some of us.

Let me tell you this, we're going to work pay check to pay check but when Sunday morning come we are the biggest tithers. You hear what I'm telling you?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: A woman walk into a meeting one time, she say, [01:06:30] hear what this woman say. Hello, hello. I just moved in this area because it's true. She say, I don't have a job but you know what I'm damn good for? That I can tithe.

You know what a Social Justice Pastor asked me about the [pro-va-ty 01:06:41] Union Theological Seminary. He say, Christine, that's a big feat that a woman has. What is the church doing to help that woman?

The woman come into meeting and say she don't have a job but she thankful that she can tithe on a Sunday morning. [01:07:00] Hello, you.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: That's a big feat. That's a big, big feat. Here it goes, when we get out of here on a Saturday, one Saturday a month, or whenever we meet to

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

celebrate its church for me. Here we can liberate somebody else, our stories are our medicine. When I was pushing back in the constant where I was living, somebody else had my story and might have been afraid to tell that story.

Rico ask me over and over. Why [01:07:30] do you always repeat that story? I don't know if he feels bad when I tell the story but you know what, shame is when your [inaudible 01:07:35] and you bring back. My story is to help somebody get over.

Right now, I'm in court again with my landlord but this time I have lawyer representation.

Pat Francois: Okay.

Christine Lewis: Let me tell you something, when I pushed to live where I live, I will push because I appeal my case even the gates won't shatter me. The judge will stomp on my paper. Stomp, stomp, stomp, stomp, denied.

Pat Francois: [01:08:00] Wow.

Christine Lewis: Give room for the marshal to come in. I was organized DWU and I wouldn't trade nothing to sit at the table, to tell somebody my story. To encourage somebody. You hear what I'm telling you?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Working pay check to ... Hello, you know how I come to be in that situation? After 19 years of working for that family, I don't know if I tell this before, I've not gotten severance. 19 years.

Pat Francois: 19 years.

Christine Lewis: You daughter went to college. Your son can still call me and say, Christine, what's up? Or he can see me in the corner of the street town [01:08:30] and hug me up and love me up or text me from time to time. I love my employers dearly but you know what, relying on that severance pay, which would have rallied me out until I got a job ... Had me in the dire street. For one year.

Pat Francois: Sorry about that, but, you survived. Right?

Christine Lewis: Our stories ... I didn't coin those words, I want to call the woman who coined those words, Aurora Levins Morales, our stories are our medicine.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: When a sister comes into [01:09:00] the room and says, I'm going through this [inaudible 01:09:01] fight right now I could tell her who to go to.

Pat Francois: You could relate, yes.

Christine Lewis: I could relate. Tell her ... Give her resources. Our stories strengthen us.

Pat Francois: Lessons, lessons, lessons.

Christine Lewis: Lessons, lessons, lessons. I wouldn't chisel anything from it.

Pat Francois: Make you stronger.

Christine Lewis: Hello. I [inaudible 01:09:20].

Pat Francois: More empowerment, more inspiration, more stronger.

Christine Lewis: You know what, it give me teeth to stand up more and be proud to say I'm a member of Domestic Worker United. [01:09:30] Let even my employers know that I stand up for women so that they will do the right thing. People like me will come into those homes they will be able to do what is right.

Give your work a decent living wage. Especially when you're taking care of your prized possession. Be honest, listen, you might not pay her health insurance but give her something consistent with the cost of living and consistent that you'll be able to see a doctor.

Pat Francois: So, are you happy with the Bills impact?

Christine Lewis: [01:10:00] Make me go hm.

Pat Francois: Hm.

Christine Lewis: It's not enforced. The Bill of Rights is passed and I'll tell you something, not much people know there's a Bill of Rights. You remember when we went to the board meeting and the man sat on the bus and you hear what the man said to us? He didn't even know that there was a Bill of Rights and people in the room did not even know that there's a Bill of Rights.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

If this Bill of Rights is passed in New York State it should have a resounding effect, across the states. [01:10:30] Clearly, it didn't. Hold on, clearly it didn't because if it was the parents would get a memo and do what was right by the workers. It didn't take much of an effect.

We get three things, right. Which I outlined before.

Pat Francois: What you're saying this bill didn't have a follow up? You get a bill. It wasn't pleasing. Some of [01:11:00] their employers don't even know it had a bill. Right?

Who will fight them for this Bill of Right? Would there a follow up to reinforce this bill so that employers could apply to do the right things and follow the bill?

Christine Lewis: I think there was ... Let me be clear. I think were conversations in progress parks, like, Brooklyn. With parents, with the [01:11:30] Temple, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice was established in those conversations, I think. Hand and hand, carrying across generations. Yeah, there was a conversation.

You know what I believe though, this is just me. I really got when the Bill of Rights passed in 2010, we were so in [Vogue 001:11:45] right? So, fashionable. We were in Cream, we were in Business Magazine, we were in the New Yorker, we were in plenty of literature. Plenty tabloids and literature.

Purposefully, I feel that employers throw out the [01:12:00] papers because they feel, again, the Negroes don't read. Throw out the papers. Even, apart from employers, workers don't even know so when I get into conversations with Domestic Workers they're like, what? I say, yeah. WE got a Bill of Rights passed.

Every day, there is an influx of new workers. The older ones leave and they go back to where they come from and there's a new crop, the crop that I seasoned. Entirely new crop.

They are not active [01:12:30] in terms of civics. They work every day and they go home, they work every day and they go home. When I approach them and say, there's a Bill of Rights. They look at me like, what? Then, I outline. However, it is not enforced because if it was enforced employers when you go to work for them will stop offering you \$7 an hour.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Especially when the cost of living is what, \$925 is it \$925 now? Yeah. \$925. Right? For a while now. It was \$825 [01:13:00] and I think it's \$825 or it went to 9 something or it's \$825. Anyway.

We're talking 2015 - 2016, employers still offering the workers \$2 an hour, \$3 an hour. A woman who is living-in, this is after for the Bill ledger passage says that after 44 hours as a live-in worker, you're privy to overtime. Here, look, a woman is working 24 hours and [01:13:30] pay for 12. There is no effectiveness of this Bill of Rights.

There's people who are doing the right thing. Listen, there's people who ... they're employers to haven't got the memo but they're paying tax for the workers. They're giving the workers overtime, they're sending the workers home in cabs when it's late at night. They're naturally doing the right thing but those who know to do the right really are doing the right thing. They don't even know that there's a Bill of Rights. Think of it.

Here, [01:14:00] we have a Bill of Rights to protect. The Department of Labor is in question also because they was beginning to establish these conversations with Domestic Workers United. After the Bill of Rights, nothing happened.

You know what I think it is? We work so hard for the Bill of Rights that we kept on the Bill of Rights and the Bill of Rights alone. Not the enforcement part of it and what that would look like. There was nothing to look forward to after that Bill of Rights. It was a win, win, win, win, win.

Go to Albany, get [01:14:30] out, you in the door but after that there was no enforcement. Yeah?

Pat Francois: Yes. With all that you just said, what do you want the legislatures to know when you revisit that bill?

Christine Lewis: It's for us to do the work first. See what we want in place and then go back to Albany. I said this as I like to call from the Scripture. The whittled woman and the judge. [01:15:00] Why I like to tell this story because that whittled woman and the judge might have been a Jewish woman. In those days, they used to make plenty children. They still do today.

She must have been going, in those days, she might have been going for social services. Whatever it was, to feed her children. I parallel that with us as immigrant women of color going to Albany. Going for a need.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: So, she warried the judge the same [01:15:30] way we warried legislatures. I think of us going back and going back. The judge in the Bible say to the woman, old lady, you worry me. He write the decree, he write the declaration or whatever it is she wanted. He signed it and she went away happy, she got what she want. Mind you, it was a journey to get what she wanted.

For Domestic Worker it took 6 years.

Pat Francois: 6 1/2 years.

Christine Lewis: Right. We went from 2004, to 2010, going to Albany religiously to get [01:16:00] this Bill of Rights. Letting the legislature know that hear what now, we're coming back because we want a little more. We were stiffed. We amend that Bill, we chisel it, we cut off, we cut off, we cut off, we cut off.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: For the past 6 years. Going back to Albany, here look, we want personal days with pay, more days off, we want health care and we have to say that but here, we have to do it together. We have to go to Albany [01:16:30] if we want something, if we want everything we have to go to get everything. We have to go together.

When you fight some people ...

Pat Francois: [crosstalk 01:16:41].

Christine Lewis: ... Some people debate when I say this but when you fight, you win. When I say we fight, we win. We went to Albany and we got a small win but we want because here, what, we turned back from all 4 years. Those legislatures who said that this was impossible, those legislature or folks who doubt that these little [01:17:00] immigrant women could go to Albany in a strange country and get a Bill of Rights.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: It turned their minds said that this is possible. When we go to legislatures and we go back, we weary them down too.

Pat Francois: Yes we did.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

- Christine Lewis: Standing together, in solidarity to get what we want. Yeah. Going back to Albany. Listen, we have other things to put on the Albany's plate.
- Things like sick days, fair firing practices. I think New York state [01:17:30] is an 'at will fire' state where they could come and tell you, we don't need you tomorrow.
- Pat Francois: Fire at will.
- Christine Lewis: Yeah. Fire at will. We don't need you tomorrow.
- Pat Francois: Because it's so wrong, knowing that you're taking care of a family and you have a family of your own and at any given time they can come to you and say, I don't need your services anymore.
- Christine Lewis: Or get them paid for when they don't work. Let us say I take a day today, you don't get paid for today and they're [01:18:00] relying on you to come back. I remember working for a family, I can't remember the agreement we made but I remember that she showed me on the computer this rich place, this Ritzy place, they were going to Canada. They were going to ski and she showed it to me.
- She said it to me, she's going to retain me, \$300 dollars. I wasn't paid for June, July and August but she was giving me \$300 [01:18:30] to come back to the job in September. I never went back.
- Pat Francois: Really.
- Christine Lewis: I was being paid for July and August, part of June, July and August. They're going to a Ritzy place in Canada, right? But you're retaining me, you're giving me \$300.
- Pat Francois: [Foreign Audio]
- Christine Lewis: If somebody approach me with a job, what do you think? Answer the question, let me rephrase the question. If somebody approach you and they're retaining you and they were pissed at me and [01:19:00] they call in September and ask me to come back, I think I didn't even answer the phone. I answer the man and I had nothing to say.
- Pat Francois: What would I do? What are they retaining with \$300?
- Christine Lewis: Security.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: I got a job offer. What will I do? You're asking me questions?

Christine Lewis: And that's just what I did. September, the same ...

Pat Francois: Listen. I'll apply myself to that new job, I'll forget about you because that \$300 you left me with [01:19:30] kind of ament in me, can ament in my child, can ament in a roof over head. If I am getting a job over what could ...

Christine Lewis: Sustain.

Pat Francois: ... Sustain me and my daughter and sister and a roof over my head. Oh, yes ma'am.

Christine Lewis: So, September of that year.

Pat Francois: Still going forward.

Christine Lewis: 1997, I was in a new job. That lasted 19 years after that.

Pat Francois: Salute you.

Christine Lewis: You hear what I'm saying. There's things to fight for. Also, [01:20:00] while I say what I say, to get the Department of Labor back in this conversation.

Pat Francois: We will.

Christine Lewis: About women's work.

Pat Francois: All right. That was so fulfilling. What areas of education / skills are you looking to gain?

Christine Lewis: Could I tell you this, I was offered ... I'm glad to say this, I was offered through my [01:20:30] writing, I'm a early Headstart literacy teacher ... But, I was offered an MFA in Creative Writing. I started it and I think that DWU needed me a little more and I couldn't continue, I had to come off because we were having the gala and I had to stand to keep up the movement at that time.

Apart from that. I still write, I'm a published poet.

Pat Francois: Good for you.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: I still write. I am [01:21:00] also a musician and an advocate for women. How big is that? Some people go to school to get what I have.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: The mere idea that I was offered and started and started to write but holding up the movement and reading 14 pages of 4 people work a night wasn't easy and trying to navigate between Domestic Worker United. It was big, big.

I could revisit the MFA and perhaps do [01:21:30] it one class a semester.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: I'm still in talks with the professor to be able to do it at a comma pace. At my pace.

Pat Francois: I'll encourage you, I'll encourage you as well to ...

Christine Lewis: It was a scholarship.

Pat Francois: Good for you.

Christine Lewis: Paid everything at St. Joseph's College in the back of [inaudible 01:21:50].

Pat Francois: Good for you.

Christine Lewis: A liberal college.

Pat Francois: Congratulations.

Christine Lewis: Thank you.

Pat Francois: What's ...

Christine Lewis: I'm just going to show what we bring to the home that we come to. This moves me because the nature of the job [01:22:00] in inferiority but we come as school teachers, we come as nurses, we come as health practitioner.

Pat Francois: Qualified!

Christine Lewis: Come on!

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: You don't get paid for all that we bring to the table.

Pat Francois: Right.

Christine Lewis: You know what I'm saying? I have to segue back into that to show who we are. We come as masseuse, we come as ... I know women who are doing the Doctoral dissertation and working as nannies. I have friends who do Social Services and was working as ... I get goose bumps saying this. For me it's real, we're educated [01:22:30] people.

We didn't just come to wash the bottom of a pan and a pot.

Pat Francois: Circumstances, you know, control is what was available to us at a point in time. Yes.

Christine Lewis: But we're all that and more.

Pat Francois: Come back to the dynamic Domestic Workers United. What skills did Domestic Workers United teach you? What type of training Domestic Workers United offer to their members?

Christine Lewis: I wouldn't say the DWU [01:23:00] taught me, I came in already fired up. I came in from a place of political learning and education but you know what, what it give me, a sense of sisterhood. We fight and we fuss, we'll fight and fuss with ideals.

We stay the course. That's big, big.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: We're here, standing and it showed me to get what we want we have to fight but we must fight hand in hand. Right?

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: [01:23:30] Will the circle be unbroken and they'll sweep by and by. No. We stay the course to get what we want.

The skill set it brought to Domestic Workers. We educated more women, I said it before, right? We give CPR classes, we give leadership training, we give political consciousness / awareness.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: And arm women about the history of Domestic Work.

Pat Francois: Also, nanny training.

Christine Lewis: A nannies training course. Right.

Pat Francois: To assert themselves.

Christine Lewis: And with [inaudible 01:23:57] University.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Apart from assertance of mac [01:24:00] hit ability, you go to a job now you go with you credentials. Now, that's ... Let me tell you all of this. It still might not show you job because to some people you come over...

Pat Francois: You're too qualified.

Christine Lewis: I've been told that.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: I didn't get a job because the man said to me...

Pat Francois: You over qualified.

Christine Lewis: ...You're too over qualified for this job because, you know what? Some of them want someone who they can dumb dumb. I will answer back and I will say, why? This is the way that it is and I will answer. How could I not when I am standing up for [01:24:30] women?

Pat Francois: [crosstalk 01:24:30].

Christine Lewis: Some people want somebody who is pious and they can dumb dumb and insult and ...

Pat Francois: Abuse.

Christine Lewis: ... abuse. Sometimes the [cornel 01:24:36] the down fall of that is that you're too brilliant. Remember, the word, the work, is steeped in servitude. The slaves couldn't read and write. They weren't allowed to, they weren't allowed to be schooled.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Nothing has really removed, except that Bill of Rights, that ended an era of exclusion. That gives it a little cloud. [01:25:00] Not too much of a cloud but a little cloud.

Pat Francois: Yes. I understand.

Christine Lewis: Because we could stand up individually for ourselves and speak up. The slaves weren't allowed to do that. They were lynched. That's why, when we talk about Domestic Work, we have to talk about black women from yesteryear who paved that way for us to sit right now and have this conversation. We can't forget that, that [inaudible 01:25:21].

Pat Francois: At all.

Christine Lewis: And sat in the bowel of churches and sing, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen. [01:25:30] No body known my struggles. No body know the trouble I've seen, glory, hallelujah."

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down. Yeah, me, Lord.

They sing those songs so you and I ... I invoke the spirit of those women. Face, nameless. Faceless women who went in through the back of Alabama and Mississippi and who had to serve [01:26:00] themselves but couldn't organize but organized! Still didn't get what they want.

Those are my forbear who pave the way for me. When you talk about being politicized and educated, those are the people who provoke that place. That and the black power movement that was happening in the 70's around the globe, that made it okay for black woman to work in a bank and still assert her rights.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: So, it's [inaudible 01:26:24] for me.

Pat Francois: For me, it was really, nice having this [01:26:30] conversation with you because it's really inspiring. The story is really encouraging and it also help to motivate another sister hearing your story. At this point, do you have any last words or parting shots you would like to share?

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

Christine Lewis: I think I've said it all. In solidarity we stand. We don't give up [01:27:00] the fight, nothing is conceded without a fight. These are the words of Friedrich SS.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: And still we rise my Angelo.

Pat Francois: My Angelo.

Christine Lewis: We can't forget that. We must keep on going. We're weary. You know we're weary.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: To hold the movement and to keep it a place of workers led. We haul it when it was been ... We ...

Pat Francois: Chimed down, chimed down, chimed down.

Christine Lewis: ... Yeah. Nobody wanted a Domestic Workers United.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: You know what? What is hopeful for me? The passion [01:27:30] we bring to the movement. To stand with the movement. To make sure that when we saw their [lamb 01:27:34] every other ... this room, will be standing capacity as it used to be, back in the days. This is my desire. You know what is my silent prayer? Every day I go to work and every day I meet the women to tell them about DWU. I say, here's what my praise.

I come to the meeting say, Lord, send those women.

Pat Francois: Yes.

Christine Lewis: Let them go. [01:28:00] I go to those women giving them the flyers and say, Lord, send those women just for them to come. See what the DWU has to offer them. You know why? Our light will shine. We're not just talking the talk. We're walking the talk. We're walking the walk. Our light will shine and they will stay.

You know what was liberating? That Saturday meeting with Juan, and those new members who stepped up to the plate to pay their dues.

**Domestic Workers United**  
**afc2015/027**

- Pat Francois: Their [01:28:30] dues.
- Christine Lewis: First time, in the history of DWU that those woman could have paid their dues. They weren't official members not by paper but they're dues qualified them to be members. [Inaudible 01:28:41] paid my dues. Think about it.
- Hear, what ... Lord. Send those women. We're organizing black women. They talk about Black Lives Matter, talk about organizing black women and I have to insert that a little bit. In the event of Black Lives Matter, [01:29:00] black women has always been organizing. Nothing new.
- Domestic Workers United has been organizing, primarily immigrant women of color. Black women, Caribbean women because it was Caribbean who came to do the job when American women had moved into civil service jobs and had moved out of servitude jobs down in the South. Black women were coming by droves from the island and doing it.
- We included Latina women, we included African women, we included all women.
- Pat Francois: All women!
- Christine Lewis: All [01:29:30] women! Said, why [inaudible 01:29:33] organizing black women. It wasn't about black women alone, it was about immigrant women of color.
- Pat Francois: All women.
- Christine Lewis: Lord. Send those women.
- Pat Francois: Send these women. On that note. I will say, and I'll say it again, still Domestic Workers United, Domestic Work Industries still on the rise.
- Christine Lewis: [01:30:00] Thank you.
- Speaker 3: Awesome. Awesome, awesome, awesome. Great job.
- Pat Francois: Thank you.