

NATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS ALLIANCE

MAID: DISCUSSION GUIDE



MAID tells the story of a mother, Alex, who turns to house cleaning to – barely – make ends meet and create a better life for her daughter. Alex’s story – which is one of resilience and determination – is shared by over 2.5 million domestic workers across the country. The nannies that take care of our children, the house cleaners who bring order to our home, and the care workers, for seniors and individuals with disabilities, that ensure our loved ones can live with dignity and independence.

Domestic workers, who are majority women, mostly women of color and immigrant women, take care of what is most important to us – our homes and our families – and yet they are often the least valued in our society.

The purpose of this guide is to provide context and education to the story you see unfold through Alex’s eyes in MAID.

THE LEGACY OF DOMESTIC WORK



Domestic work is rooted in the history of slavery and was built on the centuries-long economic exploitation and social subjugation of Black women. Throughout history, Black domestic workers have led resistance and organizing efforts to improve the conditions in the industry.¹

(Image: 1881 Washerwomen’s Strike: In the summer of 1881, Black washerwomen calling themselves the Washing Society mobilized a strike in Atlanta, Georgia, resulting in higher wages won.)

¹ (Sources: EPI Report 2020, Worker Consultation 2021)



Dorothy Bolden was a domestic worker, a civil rights activist and the founder of the National Domestic Worker’s Union of America (NDWUA). Her organizing with NDWUA raised standards and pay for thousands of domestic workers.



DID YOU KNOW?

Domestic workers are three times as likely to be living in poverty as other workers. The typical domestic worker is paid \$12.01/hour.

Nearly half work part time, often because they cannot get full time hours.

Over one-third of domestic workers do not get meal and rest breaks and of those that do, only 34% of those who get meal and rest breaks are paid for those breaks.

The National Domestic Workers Alliance introduced the National Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, groundbreaking legislation that includes domestic workers in common workplace laws while creating new protections.

While watching Alex's story unfold in MAID, consider the following:

- **Raising Standards:** From buying her own cleaning supplies, to her clients setting their own rates – and deciding if and when they want to pay (wage theft) – Alex experienced the many ways domestic workers are short changed and taken advantage of from the get go. That's why the National Domestic Workers Alliance is fighting for a [National Domestic Workers Bill of Rights](#).



"We give our lives to clean the houses, to take care of the kids, to take care of other people like our families. But sometimes, people don't recognize that we are human beings & we have feelings. We need a future not only for us but also for our families."
– Ingrid, NDWA member

- **Who cares for the care workers?** While domestic workers take care of what is most important to us – our families and our homes – they are also taking care of their own families and homes, and doing so on poverty wages. The standard wages for house cleaners are not enough for one person to live on, let alone a mother raising a child and caring for her mother, like we see in Alex.

"I had to make the choice between buying gas to get to work and buying food for the week. This is a choice no one should have to make. I was constantly worrying and stressed if I'd be able to make ends meet."
– Nafeesah, home care worker, Georgia

- **Black women, women of color and immigrant women in the sector faced compounding inequities.** Women of color and immigrant women statistically earn less money per hour, are more likely to be assigned work outside their job description, to get injured in the workplace, and pay more than half their income on rent. ([Source](#))



“Sometimes the way we are treated, it takes us back to our ancestors. As much as we have evolved in our society, a lot of racism and pain still happens, it’s just a little more subtle. As a Black domestic worker, I take pride in what I do. I’m so grateful to be in the legacy of Dorothy Bolden, and to organize and fight with other domestic workers.”

– Glewna, house cleaner

- **Domestic work is *hard* work!** Domestic work is often devalued or seen as unskilled labor, however, in MAID, we see the toll it takes on your body, the special skills needed to do the job, and the long hours with little to no breaks.



“I must remind people that say domestic work is not work,...domestic work is the work that makes the world turn. Domestic workers contribute significantly to the economy of every country that we work in.”

– June, home care worker, Florida

Take Action

What can we do to solve the issues raised in this guide? Visit domesticworkers.org and learn about how you can support passing the first federal Domestic Worker National Bill of Rights.

