

BIOSYNDICALISM FROM THE DOMESTIC TERRITORIES

OUR DEMANDS AND,
HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO



By
Rafaela Pimentel Lara
Costanza Cisneros Sánchez
Amalia Caballero Richard
Ana Rojo Delgado

In conversation with members
of Territorio Doméstico,
Liz Mason-Deese and the
Jeanneth Beltrán Observatory.

Translated by Maggie Schmitt
for Common Ecologies and
La Laboratoria.

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LABORATORIA
ESPACIOS DE INVESTIGACIÓN FEMINISTA



LA LABORATORIA aspires to be a bit of fertile ground on which to celebrate and defend life, in both words and actions. A piece of ground/chinampa/compost in which to generate conversations between all that we have harvested from the time of our grandmothers and the seeds that the youngest among us have to offer: the kids that take the street with poetry, reggaetón, graffiti and actions. A place from which to narrate our struggles, making them a source of common sustenance, tattooed on our bodies.

COMMON ECOLOGIES is a movement school and co-research ground for socio-ecological transformation. Born out of translocal and transversal desires for connection and alliance, we found ways to learn with each other in the pandemic and beyond. Called to weave territorial knowledge and experience together across places and into new threads, we do a lot of collective thinking, translation, trafficking and gathering. Our working strands are Earthcare, Ecosocial Education, and Ecological Syndicalism.

PREFACE



It's been two decades now since Territorio Doméstico first shouted, with the polyphonic force proper to all that's alive and connected, 'We're done with slavery!!! In domestic service work too!!'. They haven't stopped since then. Their chant grew, evolved, modulated, resonated and touched many people since then, incorporating many voices, building alliances and friendships at every step. In unlikely places and ways, too. They've taught us to look beyond the obvious in labour, feminism and activism. To practice with joy and dignity, to go at our struggle with high stakes and great generosity — making sure there's always food, music, chatting, dancing, jokes, dressing up, getting around, laughing and singing together. It's not our revolution if we can't wear neon wigs.

The women of Territorio Doméstico make very clear that without care and reproduction, the world doesn't move — life just won't work, societies would crumble, wheels would stop turning, cities descend into chaos. Territorio Doméstico also knows that building a struggle around work is about so much more than just wages, rights or roles. It's about claiming the right to joy, care and relation. Over the years, they have shown all of us that to fight for something is never just about an issue, nor about clever strategies or grandiloquent concepts: to fight is to build community, mutual support, connection. It's about building the world we want right here, through our struggle.

As experts in needs and indeed also in desires, the women of Territorio broke through the silence of the labour movements as *well* as the stuckness of the broader left and white feminism. They did that with their feet firmly on the ground of the neighbourhood and city. They allied with different urban movements and spaces, and made an art out of this kind of syndicalism that knows the roots and roofs of lively places afar but also has the capacity to grow out of the concrete and cobblestones of the streets and squares of Madrid. Migration and itinerancy as superpowers, channelled by storytelling as a technology of becoming, care and reproduction. And all the while they reminded us that identity is not a rigid place, it's built on experiences and the living webs that hold us. What matters is to be held, and to hold.

Two decades on, we hold this little book and feel it weighs a thousand stories, as if it were a densely folded up web, a giant quilt, a carpet of roots. Eyes and hearts can find rest with this book, at the same time as being stirred and inspired. It holds the energy of relentless campaigning and allying that led Territorio Doméstico to cause some rather seismic shifts in how we think, talk and push to legislate about home, care, migration, work, organising. They've taught generations of women about chanting to make the streets vibrate, and about pushing through doors of institutions with polyphony.

Biosyndicalism: to organise and struggle for the living, from below. As I see it, this concept is sister to

feminist and anti-racist syndicalism (as La Laboratoria channels) and *ecological syndicalism* (as we channel in Common Ecologies). The three syndicalisms cover interconnected dimensions of our living world: life, society and ecology. Neither of these are just about the individual, nor just about the human or just about the biotic. They point to the dimensions of care work as the sustaining of human lives and our capacity to relate, earthcare labour and ecological care as the co-sustaining of ecosystems, territories, multispecies constellations, and social reproduction as the ways in which our societies are sustained and nourish themselves. We need all those at the same time: which is why it's quite moving to publish this translation through the alliance of these three collectives.

It's high time we brought the lessons and tools of Territorio Doméstico into the English-speaking world, in a focused and attentive way. This here is a toolkit — it will be up to all of us to activate it. It's a box of collective cures for lonely, dispersed and frightened days. And it's about nothing less than power. Territorio love to become *poderosas*, powerful in the sense of being capable of affecting and being affected, of building power-with as well as power-from-within (rather than power-over), as Starhawk would put it. This is the bio-socio-eco transformation of labour we want: a refusal of the labours that facilitate power-over, and an affirmation of our capacity to care and act.

Manuela Zechner,
for Common Ecologies

This is the first of three texts, fruit of over a year of work by different collectives and women* who have been weaving networks of feminist unionism for a long time. This ‘bio-syndicalism’—made up of all those elements that don’t fit into traditional labour demands, mixed together with feminisms—focuses on the organizational experience of collectives of women* whose struggles take bodies and alliances as their point of departure.

In *Bio-syndicalism from the Domestic Territories* we find a collective narration of the demands, ways of doing and organizational methodologies of the domestic and care-workers’ collective Territorio Doméstico. In these pages we find tools for organizing, but also first-person narratives of what it means to embark on a collective fight. This intersection between feminisms, labour demands, antiracism and the questioning of the social organization of care emerges as an eloquent alternative to trade union models that do not reflect the circumstances of everyone.

Thanks to La Laboratoria we have been able to take a moment to elaborate what we mean when we talk about bio-syndicalism. We hope this material will help us press onward in this debate, in these practices, in this overflowing of categories which provides a glimpse into the future of the political.

Vera Bartolomé, Project Manager
Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung
Madrid Liaison Office

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WHAT IS TERRITORIO DOMÉSTICO?

Territorio Doméstico is a collective space of struggle and empowerment by and for women, mostly migrants and domestic and care workers. The important thing—what really brings us together—is that we are women that do a kind of work that is difficult, unending and invisibilized: the work of caring for people and homes. With that as our point of departure, we created a space in which to feel heard and valued, to support one another and fight to improve our lives while also building a more liveable world for everyone. We fight for the recognition of our rights as domestic workers and carers, but also so that life-sustaining care work be recognized and made visible. We fight because an overhaul of the social organization of care is imperative for everyone.

Though the name of the group was decided later, Territorio Doméstico was born in 2006 as a space of encounter between different collectives: The Agencia de Asuntos Precarios (Bureau of Precarious Affairs), women connected to Servicio Doméstico Activo (Active Domestic Service), the intercultural group Cita de Mujeres de Lavapiés (Lavapiés Women's Circle) as well as other women who gradually joined. Throughout our history we have been and continue to be part of a mesh of collectives that develop shared projects to respond in collective and self-organized ways to the precarity provoked by successive economic crises, to border policies and the criminalization of immigration, to the privatization of public services, to the global crisis of care, etc.

We are a diverse, *mestizo* and transborder collective. Territorio Doméstico is made up of women from different origins: Dominican, Colombian, Ecuadorian, Romanian, Spanish, Senegalese, Bangladeshi, Bolivian, Moroccan, Nicaraguan, Peruvian, etc.; women who have defied borders in search of a better life. Women with different visions of life, beliefs, and even religions: feminist nuns, Muslims, Latin American women from grassroots church communities in our countries of origin, and non-believers committed to feminisms and social movements all come together in Territorio Doméstico.

Territorio Doméstico also includes some women who, while not domestic and care workers, still feel called—as feminists, antiracists, and anticapitalists—to the collective

effort to visibilize the centrality of care work—whether remunerated or not—against perverse immigration policies and an economic system that plunders territories and human rights, commodifies the right to migrate, and privatizes people's right to be cared for.

In the diverse space that we have created, we help each other to “not forget who we are and that we have a history and a valuable life project, which is what has brought us here, even if it has gone through many ups and downs,” as one of our compañeras puts it. Many of us are women with activist trajectories in our own countries: struggles for water, health care, land. When we migrate, although we do so to subsist and support our families there, we each bring a project with us, which for many of us includes studying and continuing to educate ourselves. However, the migration policies we are subjected to—that reflect the economic needs of States more than the human rights of those of us who migrate—limit our life and work projects, and domestic work is practically our only option for getting legal documents. It is a job that absorbs our energies and almost all of our time. But we are life-jugglers, and despite all the difficulties we become experts in making time where there is none, stealing time from sleep and rest, stretching out Sunday, our free day, to meet and organize with other women.

We are the protagonists of global care chains, so when we talk about them and their consequences we do so in first person. Global care chains are the perverse effect of a system that, faced with a global care crisis, continues relying solely on women to provide care and draws on labour from countries of the Global South, countries that the same system systematically plunders to slake the appetites of the countries of the North. Global care chains transfer care work from certain households to others, transnationally. Millions of women migrate to other countries to work, receiving a miserable paycheck as household employees. Those of us who migrate rely on other women—our mothers, sisters, aunts, etc.—to care for the families we leave behind. We are paid care workers in conditions of precarity and exploitation working as household employees here in Spain, then we are unpaid care workers when we get

home every day. But we are also unpaid care workers in relation to our families that live in our countries of origin, since we continue to be responsible for their support and wellbeing. Call shops and internet cafes are a symbol of the transnational care that we continue providing from afar. This is frequently invisibilized and naturalized in our places of origin, considered part of our role as women without acknowledging the effort it takes to send regular remittances, even when it means sacrificing our own needs, even as we bear the guilt of being seen as bad mothers who have abandoned their children. These care chains continue to constantly reproduce a feminine subject who cares for others but does not recognize her own right to self-care, or even simply her right to not bear all responsibility for care by herself.

We put life at the centre of everything we do. This has many meanings for us. One of them is that we take our own lives, our own experiences and knowledges, as a point of departure: not as theories, but as events and lived experiences that we have gone through and been affected by. Putting life at the centre also means taking care of ourselves, taking care of everyday things that do us good, and defending our claims by forging creativity and joy into political weapons. When we get together it is not only for the pleasure of being together but also to strengthen ourselves and provide ourselves with the affection that nourishes us, allowing us to continue the fight both politically and in everyday life.

ANOTHER UNIONISM IS POSSIBLE

The feminist research space La Laboratorio proposed that we write something. To do so we have drawn out this thread of 'putting life at the centre' to think collectively about other possible forms of trade unionism.

These reflections on our relationship with unionism are not new. In all these years of struggle for dignified labour rights for domestic and care work, we have interacted with various unions. Domestic work takes place in a context different from the workplaces in which unions are used to functioning: there is no big company but rather dispersed households, so instead of central

management there are a lot of individual households. Each worker works alone and isolated from the rest, and there are no meeting spaces where workers can come together. Therefore unionism in the sphere of domestic work requires an effort of the imagination, as do many other sectors. However, with the notable exception of the CGT¹ we have not found unions willing to rethink their practices and modes of organization. Despite being workers and having extremely precarious labour conditions, our sector has never been a priority in union agendas. We have even been accused by unions of unfairly competing with care workers hired by elder care facilities or cleaning companies. The unions do not take into account or position themselves on the perverse logic of immigration policies or the plundering of raw materials and stripping of labour rights that multinational corporations use to enrich themselves by impoverishing our countries and our peoples.

We have also explored other forms of unionism from the perspective of feminist economics, which proposes a critique of hegemonic economics — based on the financial, the macro, the banks — and instead looks to the economy of daily life, the economy of common people: everyday survival strategies that go beyond the market. Feminist economics questions the traditional view by which only paid work is recognized as work. The reality is that paid work depends upon care work, whether paid or unpaid, a burden borne by women around the world. Despite being necessary for sustaining life, this work remains invisibilized, undervalued, and isolated in individual households.

Faced with the lack of public services, community strategies, or the significant involvement of men, each woman — while often single-handedly shouldering the care needs of her family — finds herself faced with the dilemma of whether to leave her job (and thus become dependent on someone else's income) or work outside her home to achieve economic independence. When a woman has no other options, this comes at the cost

1. A major anarcho-sindicalist union active throughout the Spanish state.

of leaving the dependent persons under ‘her’ care unattended. Women with more economic resources turn to hiring domestic workers, often privately but also increasingly through service companies that offer ‘competitive’ prices at the expense of their workers. In any case, the working conditions are very precarious because ultimately the worker’s wage is drawn solely from another individual’s income. If there are women who accept these conditions, it is only because of the situation of vulnerability generated by migration and immigration laws. Thus, this privatization of care generates an environment that pits women against one another, each for herself.

Conscious of this reality that binds some women to others in unequal relations, we not only demand dignity and rights for paid domestic and care work, but also a social reorganization of all care work such that it implicate society as a whole. Traditional unionism does not raise any of these issues. With the exception of the ‘women’s areas’ in some unions, care work is not part of union action or discourse. We are convinced that the kind of unionism that we need, as domestic and care workers and as women who do unpaid care work, must go beyond what is strictly considered ‘labour’.

Another thing that distances us from traditional unionism is its hierarchical form of organization. For us, horizontality is essential, and we always dedicate attention and care to this way of working. We do not believe in the logic of paying dues, voting, or having members who receive services, because this ends up generating servile relationships that have nothing to do with the rebellious spirit we hope to nourish.

WHAT DO MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT BIO-SYNDICALISM?

For all the reasons mentioned above, and with all due respect for the origins and importance of traditional labour unionism, we have started to talk about bio-syndicalism. We have taken a chance on this big awkward neologism because we find it both an inspiration and a provocation. More than a closed concept, it is an invitation

to investigate the terrain between life and trade unionism. Our notion of bio-syndicalism goes beyond the fight for labour rights: it is a form of struggle for everyone’s right to have lives that are worth living and, above all, for the joy of living them. Because we fight and hope to continue fighting for all the rights at stake in everyday life, hence the use of the prefix “bio-.”

The bio-syndicalism we are constructing combines forms of collective organization characteristic of social unionism and the political origins of labour syndicalism, including the struggle for fair wages, working days and conditions. But it also includes other rights that we consider equally fundamental: the right to decent housing, the right to the basic material conditions for a decent life, the right to migrate, the right to health and care, the right to pleasure, to live lives free of any type of violence, to actively participate in collective life, to live sustainably on this planet within its limited and much-looted resources, etc. In short, the right of all human beings to live lives that (with all their natural complexity: we are not naïve) are worthy of the joy of being lived. We firmly believe that this is possible, but it requires radical changes in how the system in which we live is organized: a patriarchal, capitalist, racist, homophobic system, a system that consumes lives — of people and of other species — instead of sustaining them.

ABOUT THIS NOTEBOOK

We have chosen to structure this initial exploration of the idea of bio-syndicalism around the five slogans that have formed the backbone of our struggle. We focus on the methodology we have used to organize and sustain ourselves, because we have had to sustain ourselves in order to organize politically. We want to share what we have learned and our ways of doing with all the collectives and people for whom this could be useful.

The slogans and the methodology have been created by us, all together, each offering her own forms of wisdom. They bring together the diversity that characterizes us as a mestizo collective, the difficulties we have faced and the lessons we have learned, and all the joy and love that

we have poured into our relationships. We understand this as a political way of constructing the commons, of making the personal political, always grounded in practice and trial and error.

When we are asked how many people are in Territorio Doméstico it is hard for us to respond in quantitative terms. Our strength does not lie in the number of domestic workers who make up our collective, since there are many of us and just as many ways of participating in the group: some are physically present — sometimes twenty and sometimes ninety — some were here and went back to their countries, some attend whenever they can, some come and go since their life conditions do not allow them to participate in an ongoing way. Then there are the newcomers who keep arriving, and the friends of friends who accompany us in our actions. As one compañera says, “each of us is Territorio, we carry it with us wherever we go.” We cultivate this lack of definition: we do not have an attendance list, rather we nurture relationships which sometimes extend beyond borders.

We have built an identity that accompanies us and that we create and recreate as we work, as we struggle. More than a place or an organization, Territorio Doméstico is a way of being together and fighting for our lives, which has to do with certain ways of doing and ways of understanding politics. It is not a closed identity but rather something that is open, in motion. It does, however, have a recognizable DNA: throughlines that have shaped it, which have to do with the history of the group of women that have comprised Territorio for more than thirteen years now.

Our history has always been interwoven with other organizational spaces and sister collectives, such as the Agencia de Asuntos Precarios, the Ferrocarril Clandestino, the Red Interlavapiés and Senda de Cuidados, with whom we established and sustain the Jeanneth Beltrán Observatory on the Infringement of Rights in Domestic and Care Work. Much of what we recount here is the result of joint work and collective projects with those groups.

We believe that what sets us apart has to do with all of this, and we hope to share it in this pamphlet.

This text is something between a history of the group, an organizational manual and a political text. It compiles our main demands and our ways of doing, as well as the tools of feminist bio-syndicalism that we practice from our domestic territories.





Leyenda

- Centros sociales y culturales, casas de acogida, casas de apoyo, etc.
- Acciones, huelgas, recuperaciones, ocupaciones, enfrentamientos, etc.
- Cooperativas, organizaciones, sindicatos, colectivos, etc.
- Manifestaciones, movilizaciones, performances, etc.
- Redes de cuidados y autocuidados, acompañamiento, salud pública, etc.
- Racismo institucional, violencia policial, redes, desahucios, etc.
- Xenofobia, atentados racistas, acciones de odio, amenazas, etc.
- Especulación inmobiliaria, gentrificación, turistificación, etc.

Estas señalizaciones son sugerencias para empezar a trabajar, se pueden crear iconos para ello hay pegatinas en blanco, marcar con colores, dibujar, rayar zonas, etc.; siempre referenciando la señalización debajo del mapa.

A manera de orientación

Este mapa está disponible para ser utilizado e intervenido a partir de las dinámicas propuestas en el reverso del desplegable, o a partir de nuevos planteamientos surgidos en la organización de un espacio de reflexión colectiva.

Para empezar a mapear, puedes realizar un resumen de los principales hitos que surgieron en el panel y señalarlos en el mapa.

Necesitas rotuladores de colores y lápiz, y montar un espacio de trabajo junto con otras personas. Cuéntas con una plancha de pegatinas-íconos que sugieren algunas categorías a señalar (en el apartado "Leyenda"). Puedes dibujar otros iconos o ajustar las categorías previstas.

Recuerda que el mapa es un medio para comunicar de manera más clara situaciones que acontecen en un territorio. Por ello recomendamos colocar las pegatinas-íconos en el sitio señalado, luego colocarles un número o dibujar una línea hacia la trampa de regiones que se encuentra debajo, y finalmente escribir en esa zona algunas palabras que amplíen la información o puntualicen alguna situación concreta.

Ten en cuenta que si dispones de varios ejemplares puedes generar numerosos mapas, abordar variadas temáticas y trabajar con diversos participantes.

OUR DEMANDS

We have chosen five of our favorite slogans for their power to synthesize and communicate. They are all connected to one another. In a way, these slogans serve to narrate the history of Territorio Doméstico: each slogan emerges from a specific moment, each one is connected to a specific debate we have had as a collective. They are not closed or finished, they are attempts, mottos that we have used in the process of producing a common discourse. They all speak to our day-to-day lives.

**“NOTHING OUT OF PITY,
EVERYTHING OUT OF DIGNITY”**

Domestic workers are stigmatized. Most people think that we are illiterate, ignorant, or uneducated. They think that we are not capable of doing anything for ourselves other than being ‘their girls’, ‘the help’. They deny our knowledge, skills, and wisdom. But each of us has her own story, her own life and her own great struggles both before migrating and while doing so, since the migration process is a daily struggle in itself. But we need to lean on each other, we need collective energy and forms of knowledge to bring out all of our strength. We do not want people to do things for us, we do not want to be considered victims. We do not want any handouts.

That is why we say “Nothing out of Pity, Everything out of Dignity.” From the very beginning, we wanted to take to the streets with our power and say loud and clear that our struggle is a matter of social justice, not of charity or social assistance. To those who treat us like ‘poor little migrants’, we say: “We are working on something in which you too have a stake, something that affects you and your family and the whole social structure, so why are you addressing us out of pity?”

Addressing us as poor little migrants is more comfortable because that is how you might talk about something remote, that doesn’t really have anything to do with you: a misfortune that occurred far away because people have to flee poverty to feed their families. But if we start from a critical political analysis things change. Suddenly this interpellates you directly,

it forces you to think about what position *you* occupy and what *you* can contribute — or not — within the machinery of economic relations between “the Souths” and “the Norths.” It forces you to consider how existing migration policies are advantageous, very advantageous, for this part of the world.

Pity, at its core, has to do with the image of maids, the idea that because one is Indian, or Black, or Mestiza, or from an ‘underdeveloped country,’ that this is one’s destiny, one’s lot in life. If that is the point of departure, then it is a quick step from “poor little immigrants” to “immigrants are invading us.” There are people who think that they are doing you a favor when they hire you for a pittance or when they give you clothes that nobody wants anymore: they truly believe they are helping you. Think of the typical headline in the news: “The poor woman fell from the fifth floor cleaning the window of an executive’s house.” It seems like a natural disaster, as if it were inevitable, as if the executive in question had nothing to do with it.

We don’t want anyone to feel sorry for us; we want to break away from the pathetic register. We want to break with the covert racism and classism that lurk in all these discourses: the paternalistic way we are instructed again and again what a washing machine is and how it works, or the way they characterize us by nationality: “Ecuadorian women are very good with children because they are so affectionate,” “Romanian women are great for cleaning because they are very strong.” We are not feather-dusters: we are domestic workers and we are also so much more.

Don’t do me any favors. Feel how you are affected by this global situation in which we all participate, albeit from unequal positions. See me as an equal, distinct and diverse, but a person just like you.

**“SLAVERY IS OVER:
IN DOMESTIC SERVICE AS WELL!”**

We understand domestic work as a type of 21st century slavery. It is not the only one, but it is currently one of the most intensive and extensive forms. Intensive because in the case of live-in domestic workers, it involves twenty-

four hours a day and six days of the week; extensive because it is so normalized, with many people involved in its machinery. Nobody is shocked if someone says they have hired a live-in worker. They say it as if it were of no account, “I have a live-in” or “You should get a live-in,” as if it were like buying a handbag.

There are many elements characteristic of the slavery relationship that creep into domestic work. How when they speak of you they say, “my girl”: they both infantilize you and refer to you as if you were their property. Its like a journey through time to an earlier century. Racism and classism come together to obscure the complete human being that each one of us is, and reduce us to this: “their girls”, even though we are thirty, forty, over fifty years old.

There is also a trace of slavery in the way they make use of our energies without having to negotiate anything. They hire you for one house, but they end up sending you everywhere: to the office, the mother-in-law’s house or to the house of their son who recently moved out but never learned to wash his own underwear. When the contract is being signed, they usually minimize the work involved: “You will have to take care of the children and if you have some extra time, then clean a bit.” That “clean a bit” becomes running the whole house, with all its responsibilities, an infinite number of little tasks: “Make me a potato omelette”, “take out the trash”, “clean the windows”... As if those tasks did not take time and effort, as if your working day were a bottomless sack. Only a slave can do all that!

For live-in workers this dynamic is taken to the extreme. It is difficult to set limits, because you are in their hands. The way they treat you, how they expect you to adapt to their behaviours, even to their tastes, the room that they choose for you — always the worst in the house — says everything about the relationship of servitude that they expect.

The uniform is an important symbol in this sense. The uniform they have you wear is often an expensive one because, in some way, you’ve become a symbol of their house and they don’t want you to clash with the surroundings. You have become just another item of

household decoration, an article that speaks of the family’s status. And don’t even think of wearing street clothes, or they’ll say: “You look like a lady.” Excuse me, we are ladies! That is to say, we are women to be reckoned with!

“THEY WANTED HANDS,
THEY GOT PEOPLE”

When we have a job, whether caring for children or elderly people, we do it with dedication; we are humans willing to give the best that we have and we try to make sure that our work is satisfactory for the whole family. If we become attached to the kids or if an elderly person we have cared for and lived with dies, we feel pain and go through mourning. Nobody recognizes these emotions in us: they dehumanize us once again.

They also deny us all rights. They deny us the right to get sick: “If you knew that you were going to get ill, why did you look for work?” The idea of a domestic worker who takes her own children to the playground is unfathomable. Or who wants to go to the movies or have a drink in a bar. They see us as pure labour to be squeezed, someone who goes from home to work and back and nothing else, for whom a corner with a bed and a television is enough. They don’t realize that these hands that they make use of actually belong to someone and are not separate from our head, our heart, our body. We are whole human beings and, like everyone else, we need health care, education for our children, housing, free time... Yes, even free time: a social life, friendships, relationships, and moments for having fun.

That is what we mean when we say “They wanted hands, they got people.” We are also talking about immigration law, that closes doors on us and reduces us to mere hands. Borders only open to us if we limit ourselves to being cheap labour, to serving others, and don’t aspire to have our own life. “They wanted hands, they got people” is another way of saying “No human being is illegal.” We came because they need us, but they only want one part of our humanity. We also came because they expelled us from our territories, they plundered our lands, our sources of wealth, our survival

and that of our peoples, but that part is always left out. We are denied both the history we leave behind and the reality we experience here. We are denied the possibility of making a life here, of sharing with friends, family, of enjoying our sexuality. As a live-in worker, you are denied the very possibility of a home. This becomes clear when we are fired: we not only lose a job, but also the roof over our head. But our employees never take responsibility. Not for that nor for our emotions when, for example, we mention that we miss the kids or elderly person we have taken care of.

In job announcements and interviews, they frequently say they are looking for a “young and unencumbered” domestic worker. They would like to add, although they don’t usually dare, “who does not often get ill.” They’re looking for someone without humanity, without history. Dehumanizing is the easiest way to avoid having to empathize or put themselves in our place; it allows them to expect us to obey like machines, and to throw us out like trash if we “don’t work out.” They dehumanize us and take away our histories, as if we only started to exist the moment we got off the plane. But we already existed! It is important that we reclaim our history, all that we bring with us that does not disappear upon arrival, but is combined with what we encounter here, and continues evolving.

This happens with all types of workers, but there is something specific to the domestic space that goes even further, because our work is not recognized as true work. What we do is “help.” Although you are keeping their mother going, caring for their children, ironing, running the whole house, they say: “That’s my girl, she helps out.” Some people give up their whole lives to provide that “help”, like many live-in domestic workers who, after working for decades, return to their homelands to die alone without even the right to retirement benefits and without anyone to care for them because they were not able to build their own family, or they lost the family they had. Calling this work “help” is a way of devaluing and ignoring everything it involves. It is pure sexism: an extreme way of rendering invisible the importance of the work that we women do to sustain everyday life.

“WITHOUT US, THE WORLD DOES NOT TURN”

This was Territorio Doméstico’s original motto. It has to do with how care is discussed. When we talk about ‘care’, we are not only talking about caring for children, the elderly and the infirm, but rather the care that everyone requires, as well as the care of the Earth and all that surrounds us. We are referring to care as a basic principle of humanity. As human beings, we are social, interdependent beings, deserving and providing care. Caring is part of life processes and if we do not do it, we become disconnected from humanity and the rest of the planet’s life forms, from the land. If we devote ourselves to exploiting everything, we will end up not having anything.

The issue is that care has been commodified. A lucrative business has been built out of childhood and old age: very low-cost services for those who can afford them, often provided in penurious conditions. Everyone else — those who cannot pay for such services — are abandoned. This is what we refer to as the ‘global care crisis’. When we look at it head-on, it is clear that profound changes are needed. The slogan “Without us, the world does not turn” addresses this problem while at the same time recognizing the value of what we do. The slogan affirms that without us — household and care workers, but also women in general — everyday life could not be sustained. As things stand at present, and in the absence of a public system that would guarantee the right to care for the whole population, without us — domestic and care workers — without the commodification and privatization of our work within homes, there would be no care for people. We are necessary and important. It is fundamental to remember this, because when many of us start doing this work we are embarrassed by it; we hide the fact that we are domestic workers. Those who have more education even find it humiliating. This is why it is so important for us to say this, not only for a broader audience but also for ourselves: revising our own beliefs, and attributing value to the essential work that we do.

What would happen if one day we did not work? Looking at it this way helps us see clearly how we sustain the constant thrum of life. Without us not even the most important and powerful man could be out there exercising his power. Without us—the women who provide care free of charge and then in addition also work in the paid care and housework sector—this whole system would collapse. The market and capitalism need invisible, precarious, feminized, badly paid or completely unpaid care work so that people can be productive within this system in which value is only attributed to that which generates profits and money.

Sometimes we say to ourselves: “If I don’t go to work, my employer can’t go to her job.” But we don’t want to blame other women, our employers, either. This must stop being a women’s issue. Refusing to blame each other means naming the heteropatriarchal system. Where are the men in this whole story? What kind of system is this in which the most important work in the world receives the worst treatment?

So this slogan is for all women, not only domestic workers. If we were able to leave our countries, it is thanks to other women—our grandmothers, aunts, friends and sisters—who have taken on the care of our families. We are lead players in global care chains which are chains of exploitation and oppression but also of abandonment. Care is all about immediacy, it is not something that can be put off until tomorrow, it cannot wait. Which is why, in this patriarchal set-up, if you are not rich and you have to work, then either another woman covers for you or you just have to figure it out, make do somehow. And then they say you’re a bad mother if you don’t find a good solution! We feel doubly exploited: as women and as domestic workers. And of course also as migrants.

When we say “Without us, the world does not turn” we are demanding that care work be recognized, and we are asking why this work is the worst paid, why it has the fewest rights, why it is more invisible than most other jobs. We know that in the present labour market work is ever more precarious in general, but even so we continue being among the weakest links. We bear the brunt of the trend of increasing precarity that makes so many of

the families that require care seek to pay a pittance for it. Our struggle goes beyond demanding the complete inclusion of domestic work in the general Social Security regime, the right to receive unemployment benefits like other workers who pay into Social Security, and an end to the figure of ‘withdrawal of contract’, a way of firing us that leaves us totally unprotected. We are speaking much more broadly about every person’s right to be cared for, and the need to care for those who care. This is why we demand a reorganization of care. We want men to take on part of the responsibility. If care work were recognized, if it were well-paid, the sector would be full of men. We want the State to participate, to fund care, because families are not companies and most of them cannot pay what they should. Just as there is public education and health care, there should be a public care system.

“POLITICIZING POTS AND PANS, STREETS AND APRONS”

“Politicize the pots and pans, streets and aprons” is perhaps our most abstract slogan. It arose from conversations with accomplices and friends such as Silvia Federici and the *Eje de Precariedad y Economía Feminista* (Precarity and Feminist Economy Working Group) and represents a step beyond “Without us, the world does not turn.” The question becomes, “What world do we want to be turning?”

When we say ‘politicize’ we aren’t referring to electoral campaigning, making empty policies or professional technical projects. We mean starting from a radical critical vision that gets to the root of problems, that brings to light the exploitation and oppression that women suffer in the private sphere. It is this vision that demonstrates that care is fundamental. We mean proclaiming loud and clear that pots, pans, aprons, mops, brooms, vacuum-cleaners, strollers, and all the rest of it do not move on their own: we move them! We mean taking objects that are usually hidden in private homes out into the public and giving them another meaning. We mean asking why things are set up the way they are, and asking all of society how things could be organized differently.

We mean demanding rights and fighting for the chance to live the way we want to: breaking with a patriarchal, capitalist, and racist system that is violent towards all forms of dissidence, and generating other dynamics in which capital and the economy are not at the centre of everything. We want to see life, the management of what is common, diversity, and social justice at the centre.

This slogan marks a turning point in Territorio Doméstico's political consciousness. Recognizing the political character of everyday things — politicizing them — unleashes consciousness-raising processes of enormous value. I politicize my pots and pans when I recognize that the regulation of domestic work affects all of us, not only domestic workers. If we were to achieve an adequate recognition of care work's true importance in this labour market which establishes what has economic value and what does not, it would have an impact in all other spheres. I politicize my pots and pans when I fight for my employer to make Social Security contributions for me. I politicize my pots and pans when we raise others' awareness by making demands in all the ways we do. I politicize my pots and pans when I realize that I am not the only one being screwed over by working in shitty conditions as a domestic worker or being the only one in the family who does care work: it is something that also screws over other women who, like me, have to take care of others or even want to take care of others, but also want to have time for themselves, to philosophize and write their great book or simply enjoy the good things in life. I politicize my pots and pans when I stop taking the easy way out and hiring a cleaner to work at a ridiculous price because the guy I live with does not do his part and I don't want to fight about it anymore. I politicize my pots and pans when I take this discontent out into the streets, when I take my rage, my disappointment, and also my strength into the street, when I know that there are many other women who feel like I do and that we all want a change, that we want this world to turn differently. I politicize my pots and pans when I state loud and clear that I do not want to keep making this patriarchal, capitalist, and racist world turn; I want a different world.

Politicizing is the art of coexistence, of sustaining the commons. It requires that we ask ourselves how we want to organize life together. There is nothing more common, interrelated, and collective than care as a human task. This has been true since the beginning of humanity, but today care has been individualized; it has become an excessive burden that each woman has to deal with on her own; it has been privatized and commodified. We need care in every phase of our lives, not only when we are young or elderly. Capitalism always proposes individualized solutions when really we need a whole crowd to care. We have been left alone: as women, domestic and care workers, and so have the families who do not have the resources to pay us a decent wage. Many people have been excluded from the care that the State should cover. We cannot fill the vacuum created by this failure to consider care at the expense of our health and our humanity. We'll just have to turn everything on its head, turn the world upside down.

OUR WAY OF DOING



We said at the beginning that to get organized we have had to sustain ourselves. Along the way, we have faced many difficulties. Many compañeras work as live-in workers and only have one free day a week, or even one a month. Others have long working days, their concerns accumulate and they can't afford to pay for transportation to attend meetings. There is a lot of mobility because jobs change and suddenly a compañera who had been coming often has her hours changed or has to go to another city to find a job. So sometimes there are many of us and other times there are just a few. We have to take advantage of the little meeting time that we have. Sometimes we call each other at ungodly hours to resolve something or make decisions. The instability of our lives and the life of the collective has forced us to go very slowly, taking care of the process as we go.

Little by little along the way we have woven together a way of doing. Writing this pamphlet, five fundamental axes have emerged that structure what we could call our methodology. We want to share them in case they serve as inspiration to others: fighting for everyone, working with what we have, practising our knowledges, embodying the struggle, and mutual aid. We will illustrate some of these elements with the specific tools we use and others with life stories of compañeras from our collective.

FIGHTING FOR EVERYONE

One of Territorio Doméstico's philosophies is: our fight is for all of us, for everyone. We go slowly, always keeping an eye on other compañeras from the group so that nobody is left behind. The process is very important: to weave a shared sensibility based on the things and stories that we share. We make an effort to always be open; we do not close ourselves off in what we have already learned, rather we try to bring in everyone's contributions. In this way we take the struggle for rights further because for us the 'whys' are important, but so are the 'hows.'

When we propose a demand or demonstration, or when we issue a statement, we do so thinking that we are one with all women: documented and undocumented, natives and migrants, young and old, believers in

different creeds and atheists. We try to involve everyone, making the slogan “the personal is political” a reality. We have learned from our diversity, sometimes without even meaning to, since our way of doing is based on relationships in which, in one way or another, each individual is always present. We are, as one compañera says, like a fruit salad, with many different tastes, smells, and colours.

When we make progress, what matters to us are the advances that are for everyone: for those of us who are present in that moment, but also for those who, because of their work, could not be present—they still transmit their energy and strength to us to continue building—and those who have not yet arrived but whom we await, eager that they join the struggle.

We pay careful attention to making sure that personal authority circulates and that each participant is recognized. We cannot deny, nor do we want to, that among us there are icons of the struggle, compañeras who have become more publicly visible. But who is and who is not publicly visible as a member of Territorio depends on many things: their journey within our collective and how much time and energy they have to speak up on behalf of the whole group. This is something that we dedicate a lot of attention to; we try to make sure leadership circulates, making space for new compañeras to raise their voices and represent us, so that they can grow wings and find a place of recognition, and also so our representation is always collective.

Empowerment is a process with many dimensions. It has to do with to each woman’s living conditions and with the harms from which she must recover. This process—learning from one another, recognizing a circulating authority, strengthening each woman’s capacity to be a spokesperson of our struggle—is a foundational element of our collective and the ways of doing that allow us to organize ourselves and to dream together. It is not easy; it requires constantly checking ourselves, facing conflicts, accepting the costs and breaking with existing logics of power which occur in the relational and organizational arena whether or not we’re aware of them. This requires generosity and humility as a

political tool for both personal and collective construction. It requires acknowledging that each one of us has her own voice and experiences, and giving importance to diversity, truth and each individual’s way of being without trying to establish a single homogenous way of speaking, of being in public space, of representing ourselves. Of course we have to push this process along, giving ourselves tools to build our capacities and our knowledge and to transmit our demands, always respecting each woman’s rhythm and where she’s coming from.

To do all this it is essential that we unite our voices, our bodies, and, above all, our hearts. We build relationships of trust that involve the affective dimension in all its complexity, because we believe in connections, common commitments, and alliances between ourselves and other collectives and networks.

When we talk about fighting for everyone we refer to the process we have gone through to decide where we want to be and where we do not. We have chosen not to participate in spaces where they treat you as a ‘user of services’ nor in spaces where the logic of opportunism is at work: where there are people looking to make a living or a profit from the struggle, turning it into a mode of professionalization or qualification, becoming distanced from its political aspects, or defending domestic workers while not wanting to do domestic work themselves because in some way it is not dignified, not desirable. Obviously, we respect that each person pursue their own destiny and fight for their dreams, but without supplanting the voice of domestic workers themselves. This is why it grates on us so much when we find ourselves in spaces of this kind. Our history is not free from conflicts and even confrontations with other organizations, at the same time as we enjoy alliances with many kindred collectives with whom we have built ways of thinking and doing politics differently.

In Territorio Doméstico we try to propose a different way of doing because we think that therein lies the transformative strength of the collective, the strength that we have and want to continue having. Our way of doing is based on horizontality, so you will never hear us talking about “my girls” or “my clients.” Here we all matter

because we all contribute, because the struggle is for the dignity of all. This dignity does not lie in getting funds to maintain a board of directors or an employment contract as an organizer. The work we do is dignified; what we want is to improve our labour conditions and the social recognition of our work, not to escape its stigma.

Nor do we want to rest on the specific victories that we have achieved, like the ratification of ILO Convention 189. Of course we are fighting for this measure because it would mean equating domestic work with any other type of work, but it is not the ultimate aim of our struggle.² Many situations have been resolved, we have won some victories with respect to our rights and this is important — we have to celebrate them — but we also have to keep going and going, because the field of action widens.

Over the years we have rethought the work we do. We started out calling ourselves “domestic employees”, later we added “and care”, and then we replaced “employees” with “workers.” We wanted to highlight that what we do is not a private activity, a mere agreement to “help” an employer, but work; we are a labour force that wears itself out because we put life into all that we do. All of these reflections brought us to the conclusion that the situation of domestic workers is, in some sense, at the very heart of the system, and it can tell us a lot about how care is organized and the situation of women in general. For this reason, the struggle to improve domestic employment is a button that triggers a much deeper

2. On June 16th 2011, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted Convention 189 on decent work for domestic workers, with the aim of ensuring the protection of these workers and making our labour rights equivalent to those of other workers. We are in 2021 now and we still have not seen a recognition of basic rights like unemployment benefits, full equivalence in the calculation of pensions, inclusion under the law that prevents labour accidents, or protection against firing, all of which violates Spanish and European laws regarding non-discrimination and equal treatment.

The Convention has been ratified by 29 States, including six from the European Union (Germany, Belgium, Finland, Italy, Portugal and Sweden) and 15 Latin American countries. The fight to get Spain to ratify this Convention has been — and continues to be — fundamental for us, because it is a tool, a pillar to hold on to when we demand the recognition of our rights. That said, we do not believe that ratification will lead to an end to discrimination and inequality, because there are other demands which do not form part of the Convention. We are aware that if we want to put an end to discrimination, we must change the society we live in from the roots up. As soon as we finish one struggle, it is time to rally for the next one.

social questioning. It is not limited to a specific labour struggle for a set of rights.

There are many compañeras who continue forming part of Territorio Doméstico even when they no longer work as domestic workers because they feel that domestic workers’ struggle is also their own, because winning the recognition of our labour rights and ensuring that our work is respected and valued means fighting for everyone, because domestic work is the tip of the iceberg of discrimination against women and migrant persons more broadly. Fighting for everyone also implies that, even if you are not a domestic worker, you understand the situations of injustice of other compañeras as if they were your own. It affects us all, so it is not unrelated to us whether we work as domestic workers or not.

Territorio Doméstico also includes compañeras who are not and have never been domestic workers, but are the daughters and granddaughters of domestic workers. They have other professions but feel that this struggle is also theirs. Recognizing them as part of Territorio highlights the fact that our struggle is for all women. It has always been very clear that those who are domestic workers right here and now are the main players in Territorio Doméstico and that nobody can supplant their voices, but the participants who are not domestic workers also play a fundamental role in sustaining the collective.

We manage our diversity starting from the material differences in living conditions among ourselves, checking our privileges of class and race, not laying blame but rather looking towards how to share each woman’s resources and potential. This has been key for Territorio’s sustainability. None of us can get to everything and the work schedules and material conditions of domestic workers make logistical and operative support very important: some of us devote ourselves — with great effort and also enjoyment — to publicly representing the collective of domestic workers, participating in forums, etc.; others focus on tasks that are equally essential. We share reflections and build our collective discourse all together; we care for one another and make our activism into a space of struggle, support, and joy, a space of bonds and affection that sustain us in the day-to-day.

And we believe that in this mestizaje, in this diversity among us, we have created a genuine laboratory. Sometimes people don't believe it—they are convinced that the white women in the group are somehow manipulating the domestic workers—but that vision belies a lack of respect and recognition for our freedom and our capacities, as well as for the memory of all the generations of domestic workers before us. That vision fails to accept the possibility of learning through the collective management of diversity; it fails to admit the power of mestizaje in how we organize ourselves and connect with each other. It fails to see that domestic and care work can serve as a launchpad for a much broader social change that has to do with women of all kinds, that it is a transversal struggle that questions and intersects with many other struggles: against patriarchy, against borders, and against a capitalist economic system that insatiably devours life.

In Territorio we talk a lot about our 'friends of friends'. Let's say there is a trial and we have to accompany the compañera who filed the suit, but because of our work schedules none of us can go, so we call a friend to go with her. 'Friends of friends' is a way of naming our networks of trust and affection, our alliances. There is no rigid line that defines who is part of Territorio and who is not. When we do actions in the street, many friends of friends join. They may not come to our assemblies, but they do respond to our calls and pay attention to what we do. They support us and additionally offer recently arrived compañeras other points of reference regarding how migrants and natives—women of all kinds—can interact. As we sing in one of our songs: "Together and rebellious, we're going to shake things up!" On this point, we want to thank all those 'friends of friends' who have shaken things up with us, with whom we have become entangled over the years: the Red Interlavapiés, 8M compañeras, the Eje de Precariedad y Economía Feminista, the Malvaloca women's choir, Eskalera Karakola, Precarias a la Deriva, Traficantes de Sueños, and many others.³

Fighting for everyone means sharing the struggle as a process of growth and learning: for those who are here, those who are there, and those to come. Together and rebellious.

WE WORK WITH WHAT WE HAVE

Even with the messed up, difficult, and exhausting everyday conditions we live in, we have learned to sustain ourselves and, to a certain extent, traverse these conditions collectively, doing politics out of what we lack. With our own bodies we have learned things like how human beings are interdependent, in contrast to the individualism and solipsistic freedom that the system tries to sell us. We've learned the centrality of care for sustaining life (both one's own and the common life), the violence of capitalism, the illogic of borders. From there, we build together, starting from our everyday lives, our stories, our daily struggles and our ways of speaking. We believe in and draw upon the experience of shared precarity, recognizing not only what we lack—which it is essential to name and shed light on—but also the strength and potential each one of us possesses and that we possess collectively.

This is why we cannot wait for the perfect moment, the ideal conditions to do things; rather we use creativity and improvisation to make the best of whatever we have. What we have are crazy hours, Sunday as the only free day for many of us, exhausted bodies, all of our imperfections, our idiosyncrasies... We draw truth from all this: what we give as human beings, beyond any abstract expectation. We often put in more than we can, but we also accept the limits of what there is.

We have many anecdotes that illustrate this "working with what we have," in particular in the domestic work

3. All of these are spaces and collectives in the Madrid neighbourhood of Lavapiés. The Red Interlavapiés (Lavapiés Network, 2004–present) is a support network fighting borders and precarity, made up of people of diverse origins, with and without papers. La Eskalera Karakola was born as a women's squat in 1996, and after its eviction in 2005 it moved to a new space where it was renamed a Transfeminist Public House; at the present it continues to house a range of feminist initiatives. Precarias a la Deriva (Precarious Women Workers Adrift, 2002–2005) was a process of feminist research-action working against precarity from inside precarity. The women's choir Malvaloca is a feminist choir born in early 2000 in the Madrid women's centre Entredós; it has been nomadic since 2018. The Eje de Precariedad y Economía Feminista (The Precarity and Feminist Economics Working Group) is a space for thought and action born in the two weeks of action of the Madrid Feminist Struggle "A por todas" in March 2014. Traficantes de Sueños started as an association-bookstore in the mid-1990s, and since its arrival in Lavapiés in the mid-2000s it has been a key part of the neighbourhood's fabric of associations.

fashion catwalk. Once we went to Móstoles by train and wrote the script on a piece of paper while we were on the train. When we got there nobody could read the handwriting, not even those of us who had written it. We handed out the script while we were being introduced. It was extremely hot, the microphone didn't work, and we just had to improvise. Since there weren't many of us there that day we each had to play multiple roles, because there were not enough of us for all the models. Even so, we were wildly applauded.

Another time we were divided up, some in Carabanchel and other in Ciudad Lineal, and we were also missing people to play some of the characters. Then a friend of compañera showed up. She didn't know anything about it but we drew her in, slapped a wig on her and out she went. She liked the experience so much that she signed up for meetings. This hasn't happened just once or twice; many of us have debuted like that in the catwalk or in other actions. Sometimes we take the stage and we don't even have our wigs on, or they are on backwards because we are tight on time; we always get dressed haphazardly in the last minute behind the curtain. We are always on a tightrope and that serves as a lesson in itself: it is about trusting our energy and spontaneity, trusting our compañeras and, above all, trusting the power of our way of sharing our truth and the power of what we aim to transmit, which ultimately has a lot to do with our daily life.

We apply this concept of working with what we have to the group: we make do with what we have and with whoever is present, and we accept that we don't all have the same starting point. There are compañeras who disagree on many issues, such as abortion, but we listen to one another, we respect one another, we nurture the process and look for points of confluence. More than being feminists, we feel that we do feminism all the time: a popular, grassroots, street feminism, not an armchair feminism. For us, feminism is not a ministry where you go to file a complaint, nor an abstract entity, nor a crystal ball to which you can say: "Hey, come do something for domestic workers". Feminism is something that must be built and we, as domestic workers, make

and form part of the feminist movement in dialogue with feminisms constructed by other compañeras in other positions. We feel we are part of the feminist movement because we participate in diverse spaces of collective feminist construction here in Madrid, and because we have contributed specific demands, such as the ratification of ILO Convention 189, to the feminist agenda through our actions and proposals. We have politicized the work of household and care employees and have connected it to proposals and discourses arising from feminist economics. We offer something very concrete: our situation and how it is interconnected with the social reorganization of care. In the process, we have met and connected with many feminist compañeras and we have learned from one another, through resonance, encounter, and also conflict, which we recognize as part of life and of collective construction.

The feminism that makes sense to us is plural: feminisms rather than feminism. It is true that there are all kinds of tensions: many of the women in Territorio Doméstico did not identify with feminism in the beginning, and we have had polemical conversations about a range of issues. But by seeking what we have in common—since we believe in consensus—we have come to converge on many issues. We have also had polemics with feminist women who protest in the streets but then are not capable of looking at the person they hire to do domestic work and truly seeing her or putting themselves in her place.

Connecting feminist struggles with other struggles—for housing, for the right to health care, against racism and borders—generates a transversal kind of feminism, and that is the kind that interests us.

Casa Pública de Mujeres n°52
La Escalera Karakola Local A



STORIES

THOUGH YOU'RE NOT
HERE ANYMORE,
YOU'RE STILL WITH US
(A Love Letter from Argentina)
By Paula Calderón

I was taking part in an audiovisual project called Sin Antena in the Lavapiés neighbourhood. I went to take a look at the Eskalera Karakola and came across the Agencia Precaria (Bureau of Precarious Affairs) which was an organizing effort that arose out of the project Precarias a la Deriva.⁴ I got involved. The Agencia had four sections, and in one of them we began to work with domestic workers. It was all very well thought through, all written out and organized, because the women putting it together had already completed a long process of action-research together. There were certain expectations about who would show up, but those expectations bumped headlong into reality. All the prior planning was turned on its head. Women from other spaces and other initiatives also joined: Cita de Mujeres en Lavapiés (the Lavapiés Women's Circle), El Ferrocarril Clandestino (the Underground Railroad), and other groups.

This business of how expectations—what one plans for—interact with reality, how they get tensed, is an ongoing theme in the history of Territorio Doméstico. Sometimes, when this tension with reality has been well-managed, it has produced great things. When it's not

well-managed, nothing comes of it. If one thing characterizes Territorio Doméstico it is the capacity to navigate processes by embracing whatever happens, whichever way things go. This hasn't always worked, of course: sometimes we've stumbled, we've gotten stuck. But we have allowed ourselves to think about what we are doing; we have given ourselves space to reflect on what we want and how we feel. There is a lot of pressure from the outside: you have to make a statement, you have to do this or that, you have to produce... and sometimes this drags you in. We have had several moments like that, but I think the richness of Territorio Doméstico is that there has always been someone saying, "Hey, we have to get together and celebrate."

And this is how it has gone so far. This year, the Ministry of Genders of Argentina published material with the slogan "*Sin nosotras no se mueve el mundo*" ("Without us, the world doesn't turn"). We coined that slogan ten years earlier. I don't know if you remember the day; it was when we were working on slogans and an image to represent ourselves. That was the session in which the collective was really born. The most important thing is the trust in ourselves, the trust in what is happening, the trust in the group, in being a group, in going slow. Political affectivity. This is why things work: the other person matters to you, and if it doesn't work for everyone, it doesn't work. Waiting for each other is literal: "We'll get together when we're all available", but also "Amalia

hasn't come lately, who will give her a call? What's going on with her?" Not to scold her, but because how she is really matters to us.

When you called me, I remembered how we would emerge from each one of our meetings. I remember arriving after one of my 24-hour shifts, literally dragging myself into the meeting, but then leaving as if I were high. That energizing effect that filled what we did with meaning and joy, which filtered into our lives as well.

There were many times we sat down to write long texts, presentations for talks, or to prepare our assemblies... often at the kitchen table, in our houses, whenever we could get together. But then nobody ever followed the script we had prepared, and in the end that was better: full of truth and vitality, without notes.

I left Spain six years ago already. I still feel part of Territorio Doméstico. When one goes back after a period of migration, one understands that migration is a process that really begins years before one ever gets on a plane, and who knows when it ends. I went back pregnant, which contributed to why I left Spain in a cloud. Seen from afar, and with nostalgia and the sense of still forming part of the group, everything we did together takes on a whole other meaning. When parenting allowed me a moment and I could find myself again, I discovered so many things that had to do with what I had shared with all of you. Things that were built in the day-to-day, the Sunday meetings, in

the chaos of the Territorias. Out of this chaos—another characteristic of Territorio Doméstico—I learned something from Rafa one day when I arrived with an agenda for the meeting, which proved impossible to follow since the participants showed up whenever they could. I was like, "We can't get anything done like this!" and she said, "Easy, Paula, this is how we roll." We never did any of what we planned, but whatever did happen was always better anyway. Learning this has helped me in life in general: being able to ride the wave, to accompany unpredictability. One compañera would show up and tell us about X situation, and being able to take that in was a great lesson in how to work collectively, how to collaborate, and in life in general. I learned that with you. You may not realize it because when one is in the thick of something it is hard to value it, but this is a great and transformative lesson.

In Territorio Doméstico we talked about a lot of things: about abuse, migration, care... At first without giving names to any of it. Later we learned, bit by bit, to name it all: I think Silvia contributed a lot to that. The things we gave names to lent meaning to our daily lives. I remember in the first meetings there were different people at each meeting, all of them with a pressing need to tell their stories, and when we did a round to introduce ourselves there was always someone who said, "I don't have a problem because my boss treats me well." But that "treats me well" or "you have to put up with it" can be taken

apart bit by bit and gradually the abuses, the discriminations, emerge. I remember we said, “This is feminism, even though we’re not talking explicitly about feminism.”

From far away you have always helped me feel part of the group by sending me little things. It is not something I’ve done myself, it is always you who have maintained the bond, believed in it, saying: “You’re still part of Territorio Doméstico”, like when you supported me with that emergency fund. This has to do with your sense of commitment: those that have departed still form part of the group. It is your way of believing in diversity and rebelling against territorialism. You’re not here anymore, but you’re still with us.

4. La Eskalera Karakola is a self-managed feminist space born in 1996 with the squatting of an old, abandoned bakery on Calle Embajadores (Lavapiés, Madrid) by a group of women. After a long fight, the occupants accepted eviction in exchange for the cession by the Madrid City Hall of two shop-front spaces, to be self-managed by the group. The new spaces were inaugurated in 2005, and one of their principal projects was the Agencia de Asuntos Precarios (Bureau of Precarious Affairs), an organizational offshoot of the research-action collective Precarias a la Deriva (2002–2005).

PRACTISING OUR KNOWLEDGES

Territorio Doméstico is like a school for us. We have all learned and grown in this collective space.

Our starting point is the belief that what happens to us is important. For this reason we share our experiences and what we know, and this makes our daily lives easier, it gives us tools to defend ourselves, and at the same time it strengthens us and gives us courage.

Choosing to know is a personal decision that provides us with arguments. Putting our knowledge into practice opens and invigorates the path to conquering rights for all. Making an effort to be informed, to meet up, and to build your capacities is essential if you want to be able to express what in fact you put into practice everyday: that your life matters, that you are unique, that you have a lot of life wisdom to contribute. Each of us has been through the school of life and has a long trajectory. In Territorio Doméstico we collectivize this wealth of experience. In this way we build our own legacy of knowledge together, for ourselves and for those to come.

We each know things from different places and sometimes even from different belief systems, but collective dialogue empowers our ability to listen, to construct our own criteria, to develop consensus, to generate lessons that are not dogmatic but rather inclusive, and to continue learning without leaving anyone out.

Each compañera who comes to Territorio Doméstico has her own individual process; everyone's rhythms are respected, what they bring is valued and each person ends up seeking out the spaces that benefit from the kinds of knowledge they bring. The veterans serve as godmothers to the newer ones. Training and education workshops help to identify and recognize each woman's potential and facilitate the construction and circulation of new leadership in different situations.

In the organizational arena we learn by trial and error: reflecting on what we have done, learning from ourselves, others, and our alliances with other groups, other organizations, other friends. That does not mean that we work "without rhyme or reason," that we don't plan. On the contrary, we plan very conscientiously, although we are always open to what occurs, to the

needs or opportunities that emerge in each moment. We rotate responsibility for preparing all our assemblies and the different actions we participate in, although improvisation and adaptation in the moment are also key.

The collective practice of different forms of knowledge allows us to embrace the diversity of experience and the information that each woman brings to the group, the diversity of leadership styles, and the recognition of a circulating authority. It often happens that the whole group clearly recognizes someone's capacities, her skills and talents—even though she might not see them—and suddenly, even though this person says, "No, I don't know how to do it, I prefer that someone else do it," the group responds "What do you mean? You'll do a great job, and do it in your own way." That is very powerful because it generates changes in how we see ourselves; it is a horizontal process of empowerment that enriches us individually and as a collective and teaches us to recognize each woman's resources and skills and manage and value our diversity.

It is the collective practice of knowledge that, at the same time, allows us to construct shared meanings and develop them together. This is how we have generated our own discourse about care, politics, and feminisms that isn't what some expert says, but is born from our own experiences, reflections, and sharing.

We fight so that our presence in public acts and on the street is empowering and powerful. We do not want to be put on display in the role of the poor little thing, the victim, who gives 'testimony': we are experts in many issues and we want to appear with first and last names, like any other expert.

TOOLS

HOW WE DO ASSEMBLIES: WELCOME, THE ROUND AND WORKSHOP

We hold assemblies on the second Sunday of every month. There is always a topic, something that moves us, which might be some current situation or it might be a more structural concern: ILO Convention 189, March 8th and feminisms, a workshop on rights or on public speaking, the strikes called by the movements for public education or healthcare... we are paying attention to everything going on around us. It's not that there's some expert that comes to tell us about the topic, instead we start a dialogue with whoever is present, each one contributing whatever she can.

There is always a plan: two or four compañeras organize in advance what activity we are going to do, what topic we are going to address, what materials we need. We do this whenever and wherever we can, pure self-organization, sometimes just hours before the assembly.

Since the beginning, whenever we have a meeting everyone brings some food or drink to share. This was never planned, it just happens. Some bring something cooked at home, others something they've picked up on the way, and we arrange it all on the table. That way we give ourselves a little warmth, a little celebration.

There are almost always new people in each assembly, sometimes one, sometimes six, because if any

one of us meets a fellow domestic worker in our day-to-day lives — at the bus stop, in the park — we invite her to the next assembly. We can recognize each other by sight, we know who our possible sisters-in-struggle are.

We don't just invite them. We lay the groundwork, we tell them the history of our collective and why we came together, and when they show up at the assembly we give a lot of importance to how we welcome them. Whenever someone new that we've invited is going to come we advise each other by message, and that way we know approximately who is coming. The first thing we do is welcome them: we introduce ourselves, we tell who we are, what we do. We explain to them that this is not an ordinary organization, we don't provide services like an NGO, rather we come together to share our stories, our lives, what we have and what we demand. We each have our own story, and we also have a lot in common; we help them understand this by telling our own stories and encouraging them to do the same. We make it clear that their story is also the story of many others, and that sharing it makes us all stronger, because we are not alone, because we are many, and together we support each other and fight for our rights, because we cannot — and we don't want to — be silent in the face of the abuses we suffer.

Our personal stories come together, we start recognizing ourselves in each other, and this helps the newcomers feel identified.

They feel they are not alone, and that there are a bunch of us in this struggle.

It begins like this, with all the newcomers introducing themselves and telling what they want to tell, whatever they feel like telling, whatever they are willing to share. One might say, "I'm from this or that country." Another might come and say, "You know what? My grandson was just born." Another might be feeling sad... Sometimes the stories are terrible and impact us all. We look at each other, thinking how we can help. In those cases we usually approach the woman individually to see how we can support her. We never question what someone says.

In all of this we are very respectful of all the ideas, beliefs, the political or religious affiliations of each person. We are respectful, but we don't hesitate to work on our political demands and slogans. We try to balance the two parts: the welcome and the round of how we are doing, and then the issues we want to work on in each meeting, weaving together the personal and the political, because our point of departure is our daily lives, and that is what we build from, together.

This way of telling stories, of sharing how we are doing, we refer to as 'the round.' Our political discourse, our slogans, our songs: they all come out of the round. Because in the round there are always two different moments: one of listening and one of developing. From each new story comes a slogan, a new outfit for our catwalk, a new initiative...

When everyone present has introduced herself and we've all talked, and usually before getting into the topic of the meeting, we dedicate some time to releasing tension, settling into the body. Whoever has organized the meeting proposes some kind of dance, a body-work activity, a song to generate a sense of play and shake up the collective energy. This makes room for us to look at each other, touch each other, smile at each other, dance... and in this closeness, in these looks and laughter and smiles, we start to see each other, recognize each other, and we start feeling that we are one and we are many.

We then go on to report on the things we're doing, share how they're going or how they've gone: a fashion show we did in a neighbourhood in the past weeks, or a talk or a workshop we've been invited to give, or how the work of some commission we've set up for some specific task is going. Then we get to the topic we're going to work on, and we approach it like a workshop, in small groups, with simple and participatory activities. The basic idea is that in this process of collective construction each person can express herself as she likes and feel comfortable. That is why we like to use theater, music or other expressive techniques, so that language doesn't become an obstacle just because someone doesn't speak Spanish well, or because they feel embarrassed to speak in front of others.

In some workshops when the content is very technical, like for example the one we did on

Convention 189 of the ILO, we show simple slides on the more theoretical parts: what is the ILO, what does it regulate, etc. Though all of this is important, it is not the essential thing. What is essential is how this translates into our reality, what specific demands we have, and how we reach as many compañeras as possible. We work on this in small groups, and we propose that each group develop a slogan and then share it in the group and the assembly in any form or by any strategy they want: it could be a drawing, a pictogram, a theater scene... Any format that works to show what each person understood and what she wants to share.

Once we did a mural with a tree to narrate the history of Territorio Doméstico, with all its roots and branches. This story has gradually become the history of all of us, even if not all of us experienced every part of it. We did another one with a tree-woman, in which the roots were what each one of us felt before she arrived, our connection with our homelands; the trunk was what we have now and what we need to feel stable; the leaves, what encourages us to grow.

We have done workshops on women's history in which—to make it feel like something close to home, not alien to us—each one of us brought the story of a local woman leader from our home communities or a woman of reference from our respective countries to share with the others. We have done workshops to overcome the fear of public speaking, workshops

on computer literacy, on health and self-care, sharing tips and advice and the herbs that each one of us uses to heal herself. We've done workshops on everything we can think of that might be of use to us.

By the time we finish the assembly or the workshop, each one of us feels freer to express things that earlier might have seemed too crazy or too weird. When we can finally tell each other these things it is like a burden is lifted from us, and that too gives us strength. This is empowerment: learning something and being able to explain it in your own words to your compañeras, stepping into and out of the assembly feeling that we are not alone, that we are capable of learning and of fighting for our rights.

Knowledge is power. Knowing helps us feel a little more powerful, and it gives us the strength to go into the houses where we work and negotiate our working conditions, set boundaries, and also to take to the streets with our demands. Each one of us attends the assembly for her own reasons, but we all leave more aware of our skills—skills we didn't even imagine that we had—and also happier, free of the burdens that each of us bears: filled with hope. We are tired, yes, we often arrive tired, but we leave with our batteries recharged with collective energy.



ERES COMO DE LA FAMILIA



TRANSNACIONAL



PULPO



ATRAPADA



EMPODERADA



SIN PAPELES



LISIADA



NI DE AQUÍ, NI DE ALLÍ

THE JEANNETH BELTRÁN OBSERVATORY AND THE SCHOOL OF ACTIVISM AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

The Jeanneth Beltrán Observatory on the Infringement of Rights in Domestic and Care Work was established by Senda de Cuidados⁵ and Territorio Doméstico in 2018 as a tool for political advocacy and to report abuses and violations of rights that occur in our sector of work. The name of the Observatory is an homage to Jeanneth Beltrán, a fellow domestic worker without papers who died in 2014 in Toledo as a consequence of the 2012 decree that excluded undocumented persons from access to healthcare.

With this initiative, driven and organized by the domestic workers within Senda de Cuidados and Territorio Doméstico, we aim to shed light on the many situations of vulnerability that we suffer in our workplaces by gathering testimonies, cataloguing them, spreading the word, and amplifying demands to public institutions and to society as a whole, drawing attention to the infringements of rights that take place in our sector. We work to develop tools and processes of individual and collective empowerment, breaking the isolation we experience as domestic and care workers due to the fact

5. Senda de Cuidados (Path of Care) was born in the context of the economic crisis in 2008 and due to the intensified precarity of so many people's lives in the wake of that crisis. Various members of Territorio participated in this initiative from its beginnings, together with people from the Red Interlavapiés (Lavapiés Network) and from the grassroots Church. In 2012 we constituted Senda de Cuidados as a non-profit organization, to offer an employment alternative for people especially hard hit by the systemic crisis underway: migrants without papers or in highly precarious circumstances. It was also conceived as an alternative to the job-placement agencies that contribute to the precarity of workers in the care sector. Senda de Cuidados' philosophy entails not just providing jobs but rather working to transform the logic of the system, putting care at the centre of life. Senda opted to establish itself as an association including persons who are not themselves domestic workers, rather than as a cooperative of domestic workers, because the cooperative model—at first glance so promising—is not really viable for persons in a situation of extreme precarity, in a sector of work with very low wages, without access to unemployment benefits or to savings. Cooperatives entail a lot of fiscal obligations and a lot of starting costs which would be very difficult for domestic workers to take on because we do not have the ability to generate a fund or to take time for paperwork and all the other things a cooperative requires. We are always right at the edge of subsistence. Moreover, compañeras we knew had recently tried to set up a cooperative without success. For all these reasons we did not feel it was a real option that would offer us the best possible working conditions from day to day. →

that our work takes place inside private homes. Our point of departure is the need for a safe space with support and legal assistance to report cases of abuse, while at the same time promoting self-organizing by care and domestic workers to define our own political demands.⁶

From the Jeanneth Beltrán Observatory we decided to launch the Jeanneth Beltrán School of Activism and Political Education for Domestic Workers, with the aim of strengthening the networks between different domestic worker organizations, to keep learning together, and to consolidate a shared political agenda. It is a proposal that is oriented to organized domestic workers and migrant women activists.

The participants belong to various different collectives: Mujeres que Crean, Amalgama, Feministas de Parla, Grupo Turín, Red de Mujeres Latinoamericanas, Mujeres de Bolivia, Senda de Cuidados, Territorio Doméstico and the Jeanneth Beltrán Observatory itself.

To get this School going—La Escuelita, as we affectionately call it—we set up a core group made up of 8 or 10 compañeras from the Observatory (women from Territorio Doméstico and Senda de Cuidados) who took charge of designing the methodology of the School, its contents, and doing all the organizational and logistical

→ Senda de Cuidados is also an attempt to recognize the value and dignity of care work, which is generally invisibilized, denied recognition and hidden away in private homes, where it becomes a space of systematic infringement of the most basic social and labour rights. Senda de Cuidados is an association dedicated to training and professional specialization of its members, but it also includes a political dimension. It is founded in a reflection on the meaning of care in our present society, based largely in the contributions of feminist economics. From this perspective, care is positive and valuable as we are all interdependent persons who require the support of others.

Senda de Cuidados seeks to regulate these relations, lend them dignity and recognition, including economic recognition: a decent wage. Senda values both parties equally, the person that provides care and the person who requires care. It is therefore a resource oriented to care for the caregivers, valuing their labour and its social worth and helping them carry out this work in the best possible professional conditions, and also oriented to the families that require care and employ caregivers. The association provides mediation between employers and workers to guarantee acceptable working conditions and favor good relations between the two parties. It also undertakes awareness-raising with the families that employ workers to help them understand the importance and the dignity of care work. More information at: www.sendadecuidados.org

6. For more information on the Jeanneth Beltrán Observatory on the Infringement of Rights in Domestic and Care Work, see: www.derechosomepleodehogar.org

work necessary to get it started. To find a space in which to hold the sessions we drew upon our alliances—as we often do—and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation offered us a space in which all the participants, over 25 women, would fit.

The core group began to plan the Escuelita in the last semester of 2019, and it was launched in January 2020. The preparatory meetings were rich in debates and proposals. From the start, the idea was to systematize and structure the school around the tools and abilities we need to move forward in our fight, go deeper into the reasons for our demands, understand better the laws, improve our capacity to have an impact both socially and politically, and communicate our visions. The methodology and pedagogical emphasis were very important: we wanted to start from “knowing that we know,” but also recognize the need to learn more, to study. We felt there should be a personal commitment from the participants not only to attend the sessions but also to “do their homework,” because to really absorb what you’ve learned and organize your thoughts it is important to do some individual work as well as the collective work.

We wanted a school with a transversal and participatory feminist perspective, a space to share our knowledge and to invite allies with specific training and experience in the diverse topics we wanted to address: feminist economy, labour law, migration law, communication and public speaking, etc. We decided to prepare study materials that would be accessible for all, clear and comprehensible supporting documents, and to record the sessions so they could be reviewed later, perhaps listening to them on a mobile phone, a tool we have at hand. We agreed to do homework individually to reinforce what we learned in each session, to prepare little instructional clips on new technologies to learn how to use social networks and other tools better, like how to share files in the cloud, etc. We also decided to do a brief review of the previous session at the beginning of each session using role play, imagining that we had to give an interview to the media and explain our collective demands. In this way we all would get practice speaking

in public and adopting our shared discourse, each in her own words.

We talked about the need to problematize our reality drawing on a broad and critical analysis, the need to demand rights for all, to build and share knowledge together, to recognize ourselves as subjects of rights so we can build collectively and strengthen our self-esteem.

We saw the importance of reinforcing links between organized women, because now more than ever we must build shared political action, unify our language, resignify terms and build our own concepts based on our knowledge and experiences.

The Escuelita began its first module in January 2020 with 27 participants, all very motivated and full of expectations. The first and second module went perfectly, but the third module had to be cancelled due to the state of emergency decreed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The expectations of each participant fed into the Escuelita. For example, one participant had never formed part of a domestic workers’ collective, but she attended the Escuelita because she said she had friends and family members back in Bolivia who worked but didn’t know their rights, didn’t have any idea, and she hoped to take what she learned in the Escuelita to form a group there and tell them all about it. Each one of us had an idea, a project, a proposal, a commitment to the others.

The Escuelita is a space for learning in which everyone is eager to share what they know in the hope of learning from every part of it: from the welcome and reception, to the introduction of the school, to the activities we do to introduce ourselves and get to know each other (“I am ... and my fight is ...” or “The Soup Pot: seasoning knowledges”) in which we resignify and unify concepts, to the expertise of Nieves and Arantxa, as well as the practical lessons on new technologies provided by Ana... We managed to build each session based on the collective efforts of all the participants.

ACUERPANDO THE STRUGGLE

In Territorio Doméstico, we insist that we want to do politics differently, in our own way, without resorting exclusively to “high” intellectual discourses. We want to do politics starting from ourselves, from our bodies and our knowledge. We believe that this embodied politics works and transforms, since it transmits the truth, our truth. We call this to “*acuerparnos*” (to embody), one of our favourite words.⁷

For us, “embodying” has several different meanings or dimensions. One of them has to do with the support and welcome that we provide each other: celebrating ourselves. Our embraces, between ourselves but also with other related groups, are essential for our struggle: putting one’s body into the relationship, approaching compañeras based on what unites us, recognizing one’s self in the other and building trust. As one of our compañeras says, “You can go to an organization fighting for rights, but in Territorio you are welcomed in; it is a lesson in tenderness, when we have been taught to harden ourselves.”

Nos acuerpamos—we put our body in it—against the loneliness produced by domestic work and migration. We seek joy and care for one another. Care is what keeps us in the group: we return for the hugs and good moments that we share. We are very damaged, and the hugs, the listening, the laughter, the empathy, strengthen us. When a new compañera arrives, we support her, we show her what we do and what we know, and this gives her a space of belonging that makes her feel safe and comfortable. In other organizations, you feel like you are just “warming a chair,” because the executive board does and undoes everything; in Territorio Doméstico we try to care for one another and ensure that each compañera finds a place.

7. Acuerparse goes beyond the English concept of embodiment to refer to the act of collectively coming together and putting bodies on the line in struggle, and of supporting one another in the process. In the words of the indigenous feminist Lorena Cabnal: “By *acuerpamiento* or *acuerpar* I refer to the personal and collective action of our bodies, outraged by the injustices experienced by other bodies, that self-organize to provide themselves with political energy to resist and act against the multiple patriarchal, colonialist, racist, and capitalist oppressions. *Acuerpamiento* generates affective and spiritual energies and breaks borders and imposed time. It provides us with closeness and collective rage, but also revitalization and new strength, to recover joy without losing our rage”. <https://suds.cat/experiencies/857-2/> – Translators

We also give a lot of importance to sharing individually with one another, on taking care of relationships: when a compañera needs something, we are there, because we consider that to be politics too. Whether it is for something material or emotional: sharing our problems, talking, venting, or crying... because others have gone through it before us and we know that this makes the weight on each of us lighter. It makes us feel that the struggle is not only for ourselves, but for many women, that together we fight our loneliness and protect ourselves from the troubles and abuses that we experience. We embody the struggle in different moments to fill ourselves with energy, taking into account our moods and our everyday concerns, as well as our ways of being, respecting each woman’s different vital rhythms, the presences and absences, without keeping score, feeling the presence of the ones who were there and now are far away or need to disconnect for a time, always welcoming whoever comes. If someone stops coming, we look for her in case she needs help, but we never scold or judge her, and she is always, always, remembered and celebrated. We know that we need the group, but we also need ourselves.

Dance and music are a mode of expression, they allow us to celebrate and bring us joy, because “if we can’t dance, it’s not our revolution!” We sing and dance when we meet. Furthermore, for the compañeras with whom we do not share a language, singing and dancing enable us to speak with our bodies and generate connection.

We embody the struggle when we take to the streets, strengthened by being together and putting our bodies on the line. Our songs serve to tell stories, our stories, to others. We take to the streets with wigs, dances, and songs and emit messages that powerfully speak to material aspects of everyday life: access to housing, health care, the most basic needs and rights, sexist violence... With our embodied way of occupying the street, putting ourselves out there and communicating with our bodies, showing ourselves to be diverse territories, each woman with her own rhythm and beat, we break the cliché of the poor little domestic worker and generate points of reference for other migrant women. We render

our bodies visible, with their curves, their ailments, their age, and we do so with pride, overturning the norm that only considers certain bodies beautiful. We put ourselves out there exactly as we are, with the energy that is generated by doing this together and the transformative and communicative power of being and showing ourselves as we are: strong, powerful, diverse women, who fight with joy as a political weapon, speaking clearly with our bodies and our presence.

STORIES OF WELCOME AND GODMOTHERING Nothing To Lose By Iris Portío

My name is Iris Portío, I come from Honduras and I came to Madrid because there are so few opportunities to work in Honduras. We experience this in Honduras and all over Latin America. I am a person with a secondary education. I have a pretty odd trajectory: I worked in three other countries before coming here. I worked as an office worker and an interpreter in the last country I was in... Then when I went back to Honduras I worked in a government school teaching basic English to children from 1st to 8th grades.

Right now I am working in a house as a caregiver; I take care of four children, as well as their father and their mother. I work as a domestic employee because it is the only option when you arrive here; it doesn't matter if you have an education or not, it is the only thing they offer you. When I arrived I didn't have any expectations, I had a different trajectory and I had a sense of what kind of work I would be offered. But I did imagine I would be treated decently, that they would value my knowledge, my efforts in the care of adults and children, because even though it was hard for me, I did give it my best. The indifference I found seemed cruel. They don't have to say nasty things to you, it is enough that they ignore you or they treat you as if you were a chair. It might be because I had never been a

domestic worker before, but it was a hard blow, and very frustrating. Even if we don't have economic means, we do have our dignity. I can't imagine the slavery of the past, but looking at the slavery that exists now, I think of what enslaved people in other periods must have suffered.

I had to overcome my own self. To be honest, I had to overcome my own ego. It was hard for me to accept what I was doing, and the way I was being treated. Also the long workdays: you get to a point in which you lose your spirit, because they make you feel as if you were a robot; you have to do the work one way or another. You feel like they've enslaved your mind; you do things because you'd rather do them than confront the sour faces or reprimands of your employer.

In the Domestic Workers' Congress in 2016 I met a woman from Honduras who had three Master's degrees. That's when my pride broke down and I realized that we're all the same. The majority of people who come here arrive with degrees, but we have no choice but to do domestic work because the situation back home is difficult, and the migration law here doesn't let us do anything else.

I came to Territorio Doméstico through Maite. I have problems with arthritis. I didn't figure in the Registry of Residents and so I didn't have access to healthcare. One friend suggested I go to San Lorenzo.⁸ I met Maite there and I felt that I'd been sent by an angel. She didn't interrogate me, she just asked, "Do you want to get registered?" and she explained

everything I needed to do. That same day I met Carre. It was an incredible moment. Then Maite told me about Territorio Doméstico. I had never belonged to anything like that, but I had nothing to lose and a lot to gain.

Getting to know Territorio Doméstico has been one of the most beautiful experiences I can express. From the first moment, I felt I was part of the group. They had just finished a workshop, I don't remember what it was about, and there was a party. As soon as I walked in they gave me a scarf. Everybody was dancing and they welcomed me as if they'd known me forever. "We're going to eat now," they said. I thought, "I'm going to go, I didn't bring anything." But they said, "Here we all share everything." At that moment I felt I was among family. This space is the joy of my life. It helps me forget so many unpleasant things... It has given me so much joy, it is like a rebirth, it nourishes my brain. Because when you arrive in this country and you are locked in as a live-in, no matter what knowledge you bring with you, you feel you've been buried.

For me it is very important to get organized. It makes you feel strong, like you are a person who really exists. You share so many different doubts and achievements with your compañeras. Feminism gives me the courage to defend my rights, the rights of all, not just for myself and those

before me, but also for those to come. Maybe those who fought yesterday's battles aren't around to enjoy the fruits I gather today, and I hope other women gather the fruits of our struggle. I am sure that Convention 189 will be a reality for the women to come, the caregivers of the future.

ITS A FAMILY WHEN YOUR FAMILY IS FAR AWAY

By Hipatia Gutiérrez

My name is Hipatia Gutiérrez. I am from Ecuador, from Esmeraldas. I come from a very modest family, but I married a North American man who had a different income level. I studied Psychology and then worked in the Ministry of Public Health in Ecuador. My husband had heart problems and could no longer work. Our situation changed, but I couldn't accept that my children not study. In the Ministry of Health my salary wasn't enough; the kids were used to a kind of life we could no longer afford. So I said enough, and I came to Spain. My plan was to be here for two months, make some money, and go back. But here I am.

I have been through very painful experiences: humiliation, bad food, isolation, solitude, getting fired in the middle of the night, forcing me to sleep in the street on a cardboard box... It is very hard to be an educated person and find yourself in this situation, with no support network that might allow you to leave a house when you're being mistreated. I couldn't tell my family any of this because of my

husband's heart condition, he had been a good man and I didn't want to upset him.

After ten years working here I went back to my country, but my husband died and I had to return to Spain to cover my remaining debts. My prize is my children: I've been able to pay for a good university education for both of them. Now I've been in Europe for 28 years. For me, Spain is like a drug I'm hooked on. Right now I don't have work, a compañera from Territorio has taken me in, she and her family sustain me and respect my sadness.

I got to know the group because I heard on the radio that there was going to be a congress of domestic employees. It was the 2016 Congress, organized in the Casa del Reloj. I went. When I arrived, it was so full I couldn't get in the door. I stood there waiting for someone to leave, and by chance just then Rafaela came out. She started to talk on the phone and I thought to myself, "In life you sometimes have to be a bit nosy." I listened, and she was talking about the Congress. When she finished, I spoke to her. She said, "Wait, I'm going to get you a pass" and in minutes I was inside, with credentials and all.

I felt part of Territorio Doméstico that same day, when Rafaela insisted that I stay until the end to orient me. In three minutes she told me everything the group had achieved and she insisted I attend the next meeting. So I showed up there and sat in a chair right by the door. Then I saw they were bringing out lots of food, dishes from my country. So I wouldn't

feel bad about it, I said "Let me give some money." But they said, "No, no!" That's when I realized I was part of the group. It's a family when your family is far away.

Territorio Doméstico has given me security, the affection of my compañeras, a space in which to tell about a problem and come out unburdened, free. It is so important to get organized as a domestic worker! Because when you are organized, things go better for you, you feel more secure and like you're on the right path. Feminism is about fighting for our desires, without fear.

GROWING UP WITH TERRITORIO

By Arantxa Ramírez Rosado

My name is Arantxa, I am 15 years old and I'm in 10th grade. I live with my mother, my grandmother, and my sister: we are a small and cozy single-parent family. Both my mother and my grandmother are immigrant women from Ecuador. I was born here, but I like to say that I am from Ecuador and Peru, which is where my father is from, and that Spain is where I grew up. I often get asked where I'm from: because of my dark skin and black hair they assume I'm not from here.

The first time I came to Territorio Doméstico I was 4 years old; my grandmother Amalia brought me. The first years I played or drew pictures in the room in La Karakola or in San Lorenzo, sometimes I played with other kids like Rafaela's nephew, or the granddaughter of Moni, or the daughter of Elisabeta, a Rumanian

8. San Lorenzo is a centre that receives migrants, located in the Madrid neighbourhood of Lavapiés. The Red Lavapiés (Lavapiés Network) and Cita de Mujeres (Womens' Circle) both arose from this centre.

friend of my grandmother's. When they organized the fashion shows they asked me if I wanted to model with them, and I went out as the daughter of the octopus worker, dressed up with wigs and glasses and aprons. I knew all the songs and dances. When I was little I thought of it as something normal, like a group of friends. I remember how we spent Christmas together, the parties, the meals...

From the beginning I liked that my grandmother had a group of friends like this, that organized together to fight for their rights, and I liked telling people about it. Now I tell people in the High School about it. In the March 8th demonstrations first I meet up with Territorio Doméstico, and then I go with my friends.

Participating in Territorio Doméstico has given me insight into the life of a domestic worker, the life of people who migrate to another country and who don't have resources or papers. Going to the demonstrations with my mother or my grandmother has given me strength and energy. When I was little, I liked the demonstrations because we all went in costume, with megaphones, and we got together with lots of women in the street. You feel comfortable there, protected, like you're with family. From Territorio Doméstico I have learned that you are not alone, that we're here to support each other, and in bad situations we help each other out. In Territorio, when someone is having a rough time, everyone helps out: in unity is strength. I believe collective

organization is always essential, because if you are not organized or you don't have clear ideas it is much harder to get by in this world; you don't know how to go on.

To get organized you need knowledge. Knowledge makes you wiser, more free and more open. It allows you to communicate, teach, help and defend yourself. Knowing your rights as a person: that is what is going to save you.

TOOLS

POTLUCK MEALS

Sundays are when we usually have our assemblies and workshops, always keeping in mind that Sunday is the only day off for a lot of us, especially for those who are working as live-ins. This is why the *comida de traje*⁹ (potluck meal) is so important: "I brought *empanadas*" or "I brought *buñuelos*", "I brought toasted corn", "I brought rice"... we see these meals as a moment to come together and have a good time. We usually meet a bit before. Each one of us brings whatever she wants or whatever she can, and we set the table for everyone. It is also a way to share our roots and our recipes, another way to accompany each other, to be together and share stories. Who taught you this recipe? What does it remind you of, where did you get the ingredients? Once we did a special event: "Bring a dish that is typical of your country and share with everyone both the recipe and the memories you associate with it." We bring this practice of sharing food from our lands. A vast majority of the participants in Territorio are Latin American, and just as in indigenous communities we have *mingas* and *pambamesas*—community activities that exist in our countries from time

9. A play on words: 'traje' means 'I brought', but it is also a dress suit. So a *comida de traje* is a bring-and-share meal, with a nod to elegance.
—Translator

immemorial—here we do potluck meals with very much the same philosophy and spirit.

THE MINGA

The *minga* is a space of collective work, of communication and encounter: spaces where affect is transmitted, places of mutual support and reciprocity. Just like in our assemblies, this work mixes with everyday life, and knowledge is shared. It is a tradition of collective work aimed at supporting each other, embracing each other, taking care of each other. At the end of the assembly or the workshop, we share food, we sing and dance and celebrate life and the work we've done.

THE PAMBAMESA

The *pambamesa* is an ancestral tradition known as the common table or the table-for-all. It is done in the countryside. I think of this when we do our assemblies outside, in a park like the Retiro: we spread a big cloth on the ground and each person brings something to eat and to share with the others. The main ingredient of the *pambamesa* is diversity: the multiplicity of flavors, colours and aromas that take us back to our countries for a moment. It is the simplest way we've found to connect our worlds.

In all our collective practices there's always something that takes us back to our home countries. For example, the community soup pot is also part of our identity. When we do a workshop

in which we have to be very concentrated for a long time and we don't have time to go eat, a few of us cook one big pot of food for everyone. This means that those who can cook on a large scale do so for everyone that is participating in an event. Because of our work schedules we sometimes don't have time to eat, but there's always a *compañera* who offers to take a meal to someone else, there's always someone who brings extra in case there is anyone who doesn't have. All this brings us together, because we are always thinking of the others as we think of ourselves. In other parts of the world these ways of sharing might be called by other names, but we know the essence is the same: solidarity, organization as a tool for political articulation... in short, sharing food is another way of weaving together our stories and our daily lives, of weaving ourselves together.

THE CATWALK

The catwalk was born as a strategy so that women domestic workers could go out into the streets to denounce our situation and make our demands visible in public.

For those of us that didn't dare go out in public for fear that our bosses might recognize us, the wigs and feather boas were, at first, a way of protecting ourselves. At that time most of the participants in Territorio Doméstico didn't have papers, and there was a lot of fear. We weren't yet talking in terms of *acuerpando* the struggle, but we did want to go out

to make our demands, putting our bodies ahead of our words. While we were thinking how to do this, trying different ideas out, it occurred to us to use costumes to protect our anonymity. We will always remember Amalia putting on some giant glasses and a wig, and all of us saying: "No one will recognize you!"

The first catwalk, as such, was in Lavapiés in 2011. We were still suffering the effects of the 2008 crisis, and the situation was hard. We were starting to demand the inclusion of domestic work within the general regime of labour law; at that time it had a special regime. We invented various characters or looks for that first fashion show: the *undocumented* look, the *it's just like you're part of the family* look, the *transnational*, the *caregiver both here and there*, the *octopus woman*, the *empowered woman*, and the *powerful woman*, an organized worker whose boss recognizes her rights (she was the one that distributed the pamphlets).

We also invented employee looks: the *neocolonial employer*, who works in an NGO, dresses like a hippie and buys fair-trade coffee but then tests for dust with her finger to make sure the worker is cleaning well; the me-me employer, who is constantly thinking of herself and her own self-care and self-fulfillment; or the vampire employer, who sucks the blood from his employee. We also had a police officer, who demanded to see everyone's papers.

It was fantastic. We walked up from la Eskalera Karakola, all dressed in

our outfits and with a boombox in a shopping cart, and when we got to the square by the Valle-Inclán theater¹⁰ there were already a lot of people there. At that time we were really working on our alliances, and suddenly there in the square were lots of people from the feminist movement, lots of *compañeras*, which was a surprise for us and also for them. They loved the action and applauded like crazy. We had invented a different way to protest and to take to the streets using creativity and fun. For us it was very moving: some of us were there with our children and grandchildren, and it was the first time we'd taken a stand publicly. We were using our bodies in a different way, shouting and singing and taking our demands to the street, but at the same time having a lot of fun. It was a party, but a party with demands. We discovered that the catwalk allowed us to recount our difficult experiences doing domestic work, but in a way that didn't appeal to pity but to humor and irony. Some messages were directed at employers, like the *it's just like you're part of the family* look. This is a phrase we hear a lot in the houses where we work, but then we still eat in the kitchen separate from everyone else, they don't respect our right to vacations and when we open our mouths to defend our rights, well, then we're not

10. The Valle-Inclán theater is in the main square of Lavapiés, at the heart of the neighbourhood. Thanks to the pedestrian square in front of it, since its inauguration in 2005 it has become an important part of neighbourhood life.

part of the family so much anymore.

We worked a lot on the script over four months. The characters or looks arose from the situations that members of the group were going through at that time. So we described the fear that undocumented people experience, hiding when the police check papers. We described the octopus woman who has to do everything because the family she works for thinks she has a thousand hands and should be able to cook, walk the dog, organize the house and take care of the kids all at the same time. The octopus woman went onto the catwalk with her hands full of shopping bags, in an apron, with kids pulling at her skirts and her own children calling her on the phone from her country.

The catwalk fashion show became a regular tool for Territorio Doméstico. It allowed us to raise public outcry without being afraid of getting stopped by the police. Different situations came up, things that were mentioned in our rounds—for example someone getting fired—and we would develop the story and the analysis together, and from there we'd invent a new character for the runway. For example, we developed the character of the *trapped worker* because a *compañera* from Honduras got pregnant. She was looking for childcare, her husband refused to take care of the baby, she wanted to keep working but she couldn't find work. We talked about these impossible situations in which we find ourselves trapped, and from there

we invented a character, a look: with a roll of toilet paper we wrapped whoever was playing that character up like a mummy. The number of new characters has never stopped growing. We made the costumes with whatever we had on hand: we got wigs and feather boas and then whatever else we could find. Each person chose a character they felt comfortable with or that they identified with, and then thought up some way of dressing up to represent that character. Some compañeras spent all day making an outfit out of paper for the catwalk. Other times it was — it is — totally improvised: we were going to do a catwalk and we didn't know who would be able to come that day, so we distributed the roles to whoever was there five minutes before the show. Many made their debut with these words, "Here, take this, you do the undocumented worker." Over time we accumulated materials: we bought cloth and made sashes with the name of each character, all nicely prepared. But improvisation continues to be a big part of the show, and it gives the catwalk its freshness and dynamism. That and the fact that we are telling about what we experience every day.

The catwalk has also been important for developing alliances. We have done workshops with other collectives and new characters have arisen out of our conversations with them. With the Eje de Precariedad y Economía Feminista (The Precarity and Feminist Economy Working Group) we did a workshop which gave rise to a few new characters that

had to do with housing, health and the touristification of the city. In this way we help make struggles transversal. This is something we believe in because it builds power; this way we are fighting for life itself, in all its facets. Our compañeras from other collectives love the catwalk, and many have had to overcome their shyness and take the stage, just as we did. Both the process and the result have been wonderful, and powerful. The shyest of them said, "We dance because you're here, by ourselves we couldn't do it" and they blush when it's their turn. With the catwalk as a dynamic political tool in permanent construction, our alliances have been reinforced and embodied. Moreover, it is a proposal that turns power relations on their head, because we are no longer the poor little immigrants or the poor little domestic workers: we are the ones who provide the tool, teach it and share it with other women.

The most important part of the catwalk is the script: the presentation of the catwalk itself, and then the presentation of each character or look. We come up with the script all together in conversation, then one of us writes it down, using the words of the group. It is an open text, we always adapt it to whatever is going on at that moment and to the place where we're going. When we go to a neighbourhood, for example, we make use of burning issues in that neighbourhood, the struggles present there. Even if it isn't in the script, on our way there, in the metro

or the commuter train, we jot it down, or else the narrator improvises something. The first script works as a general template, with three or four looks, but by now we have twelve or thirteen, and we're always coming up with more. It is a very versatile tool, because it can be performed indoors or out, in a venue or in the street. Wherever we have done the catwalk it has made an impact: when we visited Austria we did it (with German translation), and in Belgrade after seeing us another group did their own version.

All of our proposals are political and also festive, because our life as women, as migrants (with or without papers), and as domestic workers is kind of shitty. So part of our struggle is to bring ourselves joy; it has to give us energy. Sometimes we feel grim; one person arrives feeling down, another doesn't feel up for it, but we stick together and give ourselves group energy. We look into each other's faces and we're ready to go. In the catwalk, the fact of being on stage commits us, not to others, but to ourselves. It isn't an explicit commitment, stated as such, it is an understanding. It is a commitment to the communion between us; we know it has to come off, because every catwalk performance, every event, is a political act and if we don't do it well, it loses strength.

SCRIPT FOR A CATWALK MARCH 8TH, 2021 FASHION RUNWAY: LIKE LIFE ITSELF TERRITORIO DOMÉSTICO

Welcome one and all to the catwalk of precarity in the lives of women. For the very first time, exclusively in our neighbourhood of Vallecas, where gambling centres spring up like mushrooms, where rent goes up daily, where people get evicted from their houses, where education is being privatized, where families have to pay fees for everything, and where sports facilities are magnificently absent or in lamentable conditions.

A neighbourhood, like so many others, in which sexist violence is common, and where women gather one Friday every month in front of the Municipal Council to decry the murder of women by gender-based violence.

A neighbourhood where racist round-ups by the police are more and more frequent, in this place where migrants and natives together sustain the economy of the country with our labour: essential labour like domestic work and the care of persons, which still does not enjoy legal rights (we're still waiting for the ratification of ILO Convention 189).

A neighbourhood with a prodigious unemployment rate and precarious contracts, like so many neighbourhoods of Madrid.

And despite all these difficulties, our neighbourhood remains a point of reference in the fight for rights. A neighbourhood that knows how

to celebrate. Our festivals. And the joyful—and political—celebration of the 8th of March, Women's Day.

Here we present our Fashion Catwalk, no less spectacular than any runway in Cibeles, Milan, London, Paris or New York. You will see passing before you the most tenacious models, with the most impossible conditions, performing feats of juggling and magic in their daily survival while performing double and triple day's work just to make a salary they can live on.

With them we will witness the latest trends in these times of crisis: cutbacks, privatizations, loss of rights, police repression and inequality.

In a Madrid that calls itself 'the sum of all of us' but in which work is invisibilized and some lives matter little: I guess they're not part of that sum.

Thank you for being here with us. Her Majesty the Queen-mother Sofía sends her apologies: she is not able to join us this time, she was held up at the airport with some issues with migration police. You know, these things happen when one is a foreigner.

The Queen Leticia also sends her apologies. She is visiting her brother-in-law Urdangarín in prison. Poor thing, he did go a little overboard, he thought that public money was his, all his. The President of the District is also unable to attend. Who knows what could have distracted him from his most important task, attending the events his constituents invite him to?

But it's alright, here we are, all the neighbours we need, right here.

(Music)

OUR FASHION CATWALK:
"LIKE LIFE ITSELF!"

And we begin with our first collection:
My Job is a Special Job

(The models come out one by one as they are named).

1. THE DOMESTIC WORKER MODEL, THE OCTOPUS
2. THE DOMESTIC WORKER MODEL, YOU'RE JUST LIKE ONE OF THE FAMILY
3. THE DOMESTIC WORKER MODEL, ENTRAPPED
4. THE DOMESTIC WORKER MODEL, UNDOCUMENTED
5. THE DOMESTIC WORKER MODEL, NOT FROM HERE NOR FROM THERE
6. THE DOMESTIC WORKER MODEL, EMPOWERED AND ORGANIZED, MARIGUAY

(The models withdraw from the stage).

FIRST COLLECTION:
MY JOB IS A SPECIAL JOB

(As the models are called, they step out, walk up and down, pose).

1. THE OCTOPUS. She was educated in her country. Her professional career was taking off, but one fine day the dollarization of the economy forced her to emigrate. Today, we find her doing an infinite number of tasks: she cares for children, tutors

them, accompanies Granny, does the shopping, the dishes, the cooking, the ironing, she walks the dogs and does it all happily, with Latin rhythm! It's the Octopus!

2. YOU'RE JUST LIKE ONE OF THE FAMILY. Our model here has been working for years in the same house. She can't go out when she wants, just when they let her. The kids love her, and she knows the house, the family, the grandparents and the pets like the back of her hand. She has to eat in the kitchen, wear a uniform even to take the garbage out or to walk the dogs. She is so "just like one of the family" that she goes on vacation with the bosses, although—to be honest—not to get any rest. When she finally gets up the nerve to change jobs, she hears again and again: "But how could you do this to us! You're just like one of the family! The kids love you. And with all we've done for you!" (Everyone repeats together: *"You're just like one of the family! We exploit you soooo affectionately!"*)

3. ENTRAPPED. Our model here is the mother of a little girl and needs work. She lost her job when she gave birth, despite the promise that they'd hold her job for her. She is unemployed, but, like all domestic workers, she isn't entitled to any benefits. She wants to go back to school, but the only daycare she can find for her daughter is private and very expensive. Her partner works until late and doesn't take care of the child.

4. UNDOCUMENTED. We can find different varieties of this model, the Live-in (the live-in model with uniform walks up and down) or the live-out (the live-out model walks up and down). If she makes even the slightest demands, her boss usually threatens to report her to Migration. She has become the second mother to three children whom she coddles, cares for and supports, and in whom she takes as much interest as if they were her own. Just months ago, she left behind—in her country—her own little family which she maintains and sustains from here. She spends her afternoons in the call-shop, and she has become an expert in chatting and social networks to communicate with her family. She has a divided life, keeping up with everything both here and there. She doesn't have a contract and going to the corner store to buy bread has become an odyssey she gets better at each day. She has gotten very good at dodging round-ups and spotting undercover police. She is usually terrified until she finds other women and can raise her voice. (Chorus: *"Papers for all, or all without papers!" We repeat this twice all together, then "No woman is illegal", all together twice.*)

SECOND COLLECTION:
NOT FROM HERE NOR
FROM THERE

This collection features two stunning models which have become especially popular since the so-called crisis, which in fact only affects the poor: the rich just keep getting richer.

This crisis, with its special sauce of cutbacks, has brought us the latest trends in exile and migration, which you'll find in Desigual. A basic look that everyone needs in her closet, the wheelie-suitcase, or the hand luggage, or the daring big backpack, even the over-the-shoulder bundle. And, of course, that essential accessory, your passport! The crowning element of this spectacular new trend is: your papers, all in order!

1. (Mari Pepis comes out, from one side of the stage). With us here now is Mari Pepis, twenty four years old, not from here or from there. She is a psychologist, sociologist, engineer, a good daughter, a great student, a fantastic athlete and a social queen (Mari Pepis packs things into a suitcase). She carries with her hopes, expectations and uncertainty. Ah! And of course a leg of ham!

2. (From the other side of the stage comes Marilú). And down the runway comes Marilú. She is forty five years old, and not from here nor from there. Legal expert and professor, she is affectionate and loves her profession, nurse, social worker, actress, good mother, great sister, fighter, life of the party (Marilú is packing things into a suitcase). She also takes hopes, expectations and uncertainty with her.

(Marilú and Mari Pepis walk this way and that, always in opposite directions, crossing various times). Sick of not finding work, of short-term

and precarious jobs, one comes, the other goes. They celebrate Christmas over Skype, and if they get sick, their friends and family cannot take care of them. A destiny of fear, loneliness and more precarious work awaits them. But what is more, for Marilú the police await, and her future holds arrest and enclosure in a migrant detention centre.

THIRD COLLECTION: WITHOUT US, THE WORLD DOESN'T TURN!

Empowered and organized domestic workers are our star models here, the Mariguays. Our trend-spotters tell us that this new look is popping up in cities and neighbourhoods as well as in the Congress, the Senate, the Town Hall... They're still an unusual sight in this world, but they do exist, and we love 'em. They have their contracts, their set schedules, their Social Security payments covered, their vacations paid... they have time to go to the doctor, and thirty-six continuous hours of rest. Their work is valued, they are respected, they eat well... in short, they are treated like people! And when at last care is placed at the centre of people's lives, when at last there are public policies that help families sustain care needs and have lives worth living, then we will all be Mariguays.

Here we have before us the Mariguays, the trend of the future around the world. We have just received word that more Mariguays have just arrived in Vallecas.

(All the models step out, music plays).

THE DANCE OF STRUGGLE

Dance is strength and energy. It is connection to the earth and to our bodies and to the here and now. With our dance we rebel, we transgress, we embody ourselves. It lets us release tension, capture a moment of joy, and connect with each other, even when we don't have a common language. We can't imagine an assembly without music. We always dance, either at the beginning or the end. When we dance at the beginning, it helps us break the ice, release tension, and feel each other's presence. When we do it at the end, it fills us with energy to start the week and to endure all the difficulties of our work. We never want to leave, and when we can't attend, we miss it.

SONGS THAT TELL OUR STORIES

It all began in the demonstrations, just like that. With our usual impudence, we began to make up songs and tweak existing ones. We told the stories of our lives adapting songs everyone knows and changing the lyrics. Each song expressed anecdotes that had come out in the assembly. They are all real stories, with real names. For example, "Don't dock my pay, just don't go shopping today" came from a compañera who asked for a raise and was told by her employers that they couldn't afford it, but then she found herself ironing

very expensive new clothes. We talk about complicated, difficult situations, but with humor. We don't like to go around crying and lamenting: what we go through is bad enough without adding more tears.

The first song we tweaked was the Spanish children's song *El Patio de mi Casa* (The Patio of my House). Then we did *Hola Don Pepito* which we turned into "Hola Doña Carmen." When we sang them in chorus in the street we always took copies of the lyrics with us so we could distribute them and invite everyone there to sing with us. People enjoyed it so much that they started to look for us whenever there was a demonstration, "Did you bring songs?" Everyone wanted them. This became another way to visibilize our situation as domestic workers and immigrant woman: expressing it with humor, turning it around, and generating spontaneous complicities with whoever heard us singing.

For the First Congress of Domestic Workers, we agreed to organize a festive closure to the event. We asked the women's choir Malvaloca for help; they have always been allies of ours since our compañera Ana forms part of the choir. We met up a few times, members of Territorio and choir members, in a space lent to us by the group Ecologists in Action. Together we decided which songs to use. They had to be big hits, the catchy ones that everyone knows. We decided on *Yo quiero bailar toda la noche*, *Torero*, *Escándalo* and *WakaWaka* by Shakira. The choir members helped

us a lot with getting the lyrics to fit, they have a lot of experience with the metre of songs. Then we did choreography and costumes. We decided to go as Valkyries, Vikings, strong and empowered women, with our special touch, using a frying pan as a shield and a scrub brush as sword and microphone. From that moment on, scrub brushes became a symbol that has accompanied us to the present. In fact, in June 2020 when we held a rally in front of Parliament we presented honorary scrub brushes to several Members of Parliament.

Another friend of ours who is a musician and sings very well recorded the songs so they could be heard loud and clear while we danced. When we had the whole flashmob ready, with the songs and the choreography, we recorded a tutorial so everyone could learn it; they could see it on their mobile phones and rehearse. It was really fun and sweet, because one of our compañeras has terrible rhythm but even so she stepped up and did the dance, totally into it though uncoordinated, so that everyone else could learn it at home. Yet another example of doing what we can with what we have, embodying ourselves in what we are.

The members of Territorio and some of the members of the Malvaloca choir did that flashmob at the closure of the First Congress of Domestic Workers in 2016, and then also in other actions like at the launch of the Jeanneth Beltrán Observatory in 2018 and in front of Parliament in a rally we organized with other domestic

workers' groups in June 2019.

At some point we had so many songs that we began to fantasize about two things: on the one hand, compiling them into a songbook so that people could have them at demonstrations without having to print them out each time, and on the other, recording a disc. In 2018 the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation offered us funding to record a disc. The idea was to have a tool that would help us reach more people through music, which is a universal language, and do so by recording our songs with our own voices, in the spirit of doing politics ourselves, in first person, denouncing our situation from our position as domestic and care workers. By recording a disc we hoped to reach our fellow domestic workers who, even though they are isolated and working alone in private houses, could listen to it, as well as the families that employ workers, and the society as a whole, to raise awareness about the precarious labour situation—and life situation—of women who work in thousands of households here and around the world.

The process of preparing the disc was quite a challenge: beautiful and very complex. We wanted to record our usual songs, but we discovered that to do so we would have to get the property rights.

We were doing all the paperwork to use songs by Shakira, Chayanne and other singers, but their recording companies demanded millions, which of course we neither had nor wanted to pay. We had always wanted to tweak

rhythms from our own countries: cumbia, bachata, reggaetón, salsa... so with the help of Inma, a composer, we set about creating new songs: she wrote the melodies, and we did the lyrics. In addition to Latin rhythms, we did a rap (to reach younger people) and a version of *Bella Ciao* (to connect with other generations and other struggles).

For us it was essential that both the words and the voices be ours, but some of us didn't want to sing because we aren't good at it, and others—even those who sing well—couldn't quite get the rhythm. We had to take singing lessons with one of our compañeras and do voice exercises and rehearsals before going into the studio. We didn't have much time, and we were getting very stressed out because we had to keep to the calendar, finding hours that we didn't have in the day to get together and write more lyrics, do the graphic design for the disc, learn and rehearse the songs in order to be able to record them quickly, since we didn't have the budget to rent the recording studio for much time. All of this on top of our irregular schedules and our exhausted bodies.

In some ways we broke down the prevailing logic of music production and its productivism: we sang however we could, we arrived late for the recording session, Inma and Lorenzo (the composer and the sound technician) were tempted to find professional singers... The dialogue was constant and sometimes tense. For us it was non-negotiable: both the

lyrics and the voices had to be ours. The whole idea of the disc was to show ourselves just as we are; we insisted on veracity and the power of doing a disc in which the featured voices be the actual protagonists of these songs: the domestic and care workers. It was a process of mutual learning: for the professionals, they came to recognize and appreciate our precariousness and the difficulties of our day-to-day life as domestic workers, for us, we faced the challenges of daring to make a disc together despite all our fears and anxieties.

While the recording was going on we undertook yet another participatory process for the physical design of the disc cover. We had a lot of ideas, and while working on them with Myriam the proposal took shape of including a poster as part of the dustcover. The poster would have the lyrics of the songs so that anyone could sing them, and on the other side a nice image with a message about Territorio Doméstico.

We wanted the poster to address global chains of care. We did a workshop based on the migratory process of each participant. Using the instruments of our everyday work, like sponges and mops, gloves and rags, we began to play with our hands, and our creativity gave new forms and meanings to these objects, turning them into something else, representing our experiences in a collective collage. Among other elements, we made a sea out of the threads of mop, and a suitcase out of a sponge, because when you cross the pond

you come with a suitcase full of your whole previous life and your dreams of a future, and the first thing you find is a sponge as the only way of earning a living.

In the end we released the disc with a run of 3000 copies. We also uploaded it to Soundcloud, a free platform, so people could listen to it online.¹¹ For the release event for the disc we waited so it would coincide with our 13th anniversary, in March 2019, although we were already singing some of the songs here and there. After the launch lots of people called asking for permission to use the songs on television, on the radio, in documentaries... On the radio channel La Ser they ran a program about the situation of domestic workers and our demands; they used our disc as the connecting music and they structured the interview around the lyrics of each song.

We also use the disc as a tool in our work. We took it to workshops we conducted in Murcia and Salamanca, where groups of domestic workers took shape. The lyrics allow us to work in small groups on different issues: migration, police surveillance, care... and then share our thoughts. This works very well.

Our greatest dream is that lots of women listen to the disc while they are working, and that the songs give them strength in their day to day. It is a political tool that spreads, because music transcends lots of obstacles that other forms of expression cannot overstep.

What the disc has done is so powerful, it is truth in its purest form: there is truth in the stories we tell, in the voices, in the energy that our bodies transmit when we sing. We are very proud of everything our disc has brought us. “Because without us, the world doesn’t turn.”

MUTUAL AID

We know that we cannot achieve anything alone — as one compañera puts it, one swallow does not make a summer — but when we all support one another, we are powerful, we are warriors. Therefore mutual aid is a basic part of our methodology, since it is essential for sustaining ourselves. We are brave, strong women, capable of doing great things, but even the strongest woman sometimes falls into a rough spot or lacks energy. And that is when others are there to provide backup, to invent solutions, to give her shelter or rest, to help her get back up. We have filed complaints in court, we have sued together to defend our jobs and our labour rights, and we continue using this tool. We defend our compañeras in Territorio, but also our friends and friends of friends.

We also support each other when there are compañeras going through economic difficulties because they have lost or do not find work. We have organized raffles, fairs, and other events to raise money, to subsist here and also to support our families back there when they are going through difficult situations, such as not being able to buy medicine that they need. We have also supported compañeras in creating self-employment projects to make ends meet when things get bad. During the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the fact that we have always thought it problematic to give money, direct aid, to specific compañeras, the situation was so overwhelming for many who could not pay their rent and sometimes not even eat that we organized an Emergency Fund to distribute money among those who were going through really hard times.

We also understand mutual aid beyond our specific group, in the alliances that we share with feminist collectives, those in the migrant and anti-racist struggle, in defence of universal public health care, the right to housing. All of these struggles are traversed by feminism, they have gathered force in the feminist struggle, that is the thread that weaves us together. We coordinate to support one another in the diverse demands and actions of each collective in order to progress in a common agenda of shared and interconnected struggles.

TOOLS

SELF-EMPLOYMENT GROUPS

Territorio Doméstico forms part of a broader weave of networks in which we participate; it is as if Territorio Doméstico had many heads and many arms; many of us have formed part of other projects and collectives, and over the years we and others have threaded these experiences together to respond to specific needs. Among other things, this is how we have accompanied processes of self-organized and autonomous entrepreneurship. With the Red Interlavapiés (The Inter-Lavapiés Network), the Agar Collective (Space for Investigation and Encounter in Diversity), Senda de Cuidados and the Jeanneth Beltrán Observatory — groups in which many of us participate — we have pushed forward small self-employment projects to dodge economic crises. The idea is to generate solutions for self-subsistence, because when compañeras lose their jobs they get stuck in really dire situations with no safety net since domestic workers are not entitled to unemployment benefits. Moreover, the legal figure of “withdrawal of contract” (which only exists in this sector of work) makes it easy to fire us without cause, simply because the employer decides to do so. We do not have the protections that other workers have if fired, which is why we’ve had to stick together to help each other make a living.

In the shelter provided by this weave of collectives and organizations, initiatives like Las Bizcocheras, Las Hermanas Mirabal or Las Tejemanejes have been born, each of them a response to the needs of compañeras going through hard times for lack of income and horizon. Each project started by thinking about what the person in question knew how to do, and then spreading the word through our networks, which are very broad, as well as connecting them support in fiscal and accounting matters. The idea is to support the creation and launch of each project, and then after that each project functions autonomously.

A project has been born from each crisis. Las Bizcocheras is one of the daughters of the crisis of 2008. The protagonists of this project are some Moroccan compañeras who lost their jobs, but who are amazing cooks, making couscous and delicious cakes. Las Tejemanejes was born during the COVID crisis, with domestic worker compañeras from Senda de Cuidados who lost their jobs, as well as recently arrived migrant women without any source of income, who had experience as seamstresses. To make some kind of living they decided to sew masks and sell them, doing so in a very conscientious way, researching to find the best materials so they could offer a high-quality and attractive product that was also a gesture of solidarity.

The catering company Las Hermanas Mirabal is another example of this kind of initiative. Various compañeras from Territorio

participate in it, some of us in moments when we've lost our jobs or when we've seen our hours reduced, and others who—even when we have work—receive such low salaries we can't cover our needs with them. The idea of the catering company is that it serve us as support structure to help us keep going, because with our incomes we usually can't save anything, and most of us have families back in our home countries that rely on our remittances to cover their own expenses, even the most basic ones. So the catering operation works as a fall-back cushion. At first there were three of us working in the project, now we are six. Together with other self-employment projects created with the support of the Red Interlavapiés, like Tómate Algo, run by a group of African compañeras, we have spread the word and now we provide catering for meetings, encounters and other events, dividing the orders amongst ourselves or with these other projects, depending upon the needs of each. In larger events we have all worked together from these various projects, contributing the culinary diversity that our intercultural collectives offer.

EMERGENCY FUND

The emergency fund was a survival strategy we started in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. A month after the state of alarm began, we know of many fellow domestic workers who were in unsustainable situations: some were fired from one day to the next, many

who were live-ins found themselves suddenly without a place to sleep, or they were fired for getting sick while taking care of people with COVID: all of this without any safety net or legal right to unemployment or to the government's emergency employment scheme.¹²

When we saw that we were not included in the special emergency measures taken by the government, in addition to beginning to mobilize campaigns to denounce this fact through both social and conventional media, we also sought out a way to establish a collective fund that would provide us a little support in the face of what was coming and what we knew would continue coming, as the situation was going from bad to worse. With the reduction or total loss of income, many of our compañeras couldn't pay their rent or their mortgages, and they were facing possible evictions. Some were even having difficulty paying for food, and in many cases our families in our home countries were also getting sick and facing terrible difficulties due to the global crisis provoked by the pandemic.

The idea of an emergency fund was something we had considered on various occasions throughout the history of Territorio Doméstico,

12. In Spanish legislation, the ERTE is a temporary authorization that allows a company or an employer to suspend one or various contracts during a specified period of time, after which the workers should be readmitted. In this way the worker retains his or her job position despite the period of crisis.

but we had always been afraid of handling money because of the problems that might arise from giving it to some compañeras and not to others, or because of the risk, or because we did not want to fall into the dynamics of service-provision... So when there had been complex and really difficult situations we had sometimes turned to one-time actions to raise money: a raffle, a sale... But with COVID, surrounded by situations of precarity that were increasing and spreading by the minute, we decided it was time to finally initiate an emergency fund, which we did together with Senda de Cuidados and the Jeanneth Beltrán Observatory.

The first step was to agree upon clear and uniform criteria. We decided together that to be eligible for distributions from the Fund one had to belong to one of the three groups, work or have worked as a domestic worker, and be in one of these two situations: to have lost one's job fully or partially, or to have gotten ill or have a family member ill, whether here or in one's home country. In principle the fund could provide 400 euros a month to various compañeras, later we reduced this to 350 euros a month to be able to cover more compañeras. This fund also supported those who were working as live-ins and could not leave the house to send money back to their families; in this case the collective sent money to their families in their home countries.

The generosity of the contributions to the fund that we received from

individuals and other organizations was amazing, as was the trust and generosity shown within our groups, considering how much need there was. There were compañeras who said, "No, I don't need it," thinking of other compañeras who should be included. We came to a unanimous consensus on who would receive this direct economic support. When the situation improved for someone that was receiving support, that person advised us right away so that the money could go to someone else who needed it. This allowed us to open the fund to a few people who were not part of any of the three collectives, but who came to us through the Lavapiés Food Bank. This is how we came to include a very elderly and infirm Moroccan woman who did not belong to the collective but who came to us in dire need. There were other compañeras who did not want to accept support, so we found strategies by which to get it to them anyway because we knew they really needed it. This whole process was a learning experience about money, always so complicated.

The Emergency Fund was incredibly well received, for which we are tremendously grateful: we managed to pull together over 5,000 euros a month, and support 16 people over 5 months. At first we only shared the Fund's call for contributions among people we knew, and the contributions came from friends of friends. There were fellow domestic workers who contributed a little money each month to support others.

There was one compañera who was working as a live-in domestic worker, but since she had the support of her daughters she wanted to make a major contribution to the Fund. We decided not to accept it, because we knew it represented a major sacrifice for her, but it was beautiful to see that level of generosity.

The second month we made the call for contributions public, and we spread the word about the Emergency Fund more widely. It was amazing when people called to ask, “Are you the ones with the Emergency Fund?” The generosity was exciting and lovely, with contributions coming in from people we didn’t even know. We always contacted them to thank them for their contributions, but there were some anonymous donors we couldn’t even thank. So we’ll take advantage of this moment to thank them publicly. We also drew from the collective fund that we keep, where we put money we receive for participating in certain public events; during the pandemic we were invited to participate in some online talks, and what we were paid we added to the Emergency Fund to round out the support we could provide and reach the largest possible number of compañeras in need.

In the process of handling the Fund, we got to know our compañeras’ situations much more intimately and were also able to accompany them emotionally. The Fund wasn’t just a matter of giving 350 or 400 euros; it allowed us to go beyond that. Through the Fund we worked in coordination with the neighbourhood food banks:

this allowed the compañeras that received our support to focus on paying their rent or sending money home to their families. They went to the food banks to receive food but also as volunteers, collaborating with the collection of food in supermarkets, distributing baskets to others, etc. The idea was to keep expanding the network of support through collective action: receiving and also giving, being active subjects and not victims.

The experience of running the Fund allowed us to see that Territorio Doméstico really works, that it is there and can really pull together to face difficult situations. Dealing with money is intimidating but it is very important, it is part of daily life. With the Fund everything we always say about being together and supporting each other really came true. It was also an opportunity to consolidate personal networks among the three collectives involved—Senda de Cuidados, Territorio Doméstico and the Jeanneth Beltrán Observatory—and to continue growing and learning together how to put care and mutual support at the centre of the kind of politics we believe in.

In the context of the Emergency Fund we got more involved in certain situations, and ended up mediating in some of them. Talking to employers who couldn’t pay their workers because they too had lost their jobs, we informed them that severance pay was required by law and we tried to negotiate to get them to pay it in instalments, since we understood that the situation was difficult for a lot of

people. We spoke to some landlords to remind them that evictions had been prohibited during the pandemic so they wouldn’t throw our compañera out on the street and she wouldn’t have to defend herself alone, face to face with the landlord and with all the fear of losing her home... In this way we all had the opportunity to experience the power of the collective and visibilize the power of support networks as a way of responding to the difficult situations any person might face.

After all we’ve experienced, we believe that Emergency Funds do make sense in special circumstances, when there is a shared urgency that allows this strategy to take shape in the group. We would not instate this measure permanently with a set amount of money managed by the group because that is where this kind of initiatives go wrong. For other specific situations—someone gets fired, someone falls ill—we believe it is better to turn to other kinds of initiatives in which the affected persons can get involved in the solution to their own problem, like self-employment initiatives, raffles, festivals, etc.

LEGAL SELF-DEFENSE

One way of demanding our rights as women, as migrants and as domestic and care workers is to share what we know about our legal and social rights so that we all become more capable of defending ourselves in our own day-to-day lives. Many of us, as migrants, arrived with the stigma of

being “illegal” and we came to believe that there were no laws to protect us. This is the first notion we must get rid of.

Many compañeras who don’t have papers are afraid of being stopped and deported; this leads them to accept work in terrible conditions with the promise of getting papers. All they want is to earn a living any way they can to subsist here and be able to send money back to their countries. Out of fear of police round-ups and surveillance they try to be as invisible as possible until they are able to regularize their situation. This is why many accept work as live-ins, despite the flagrant violation of rights they experience.

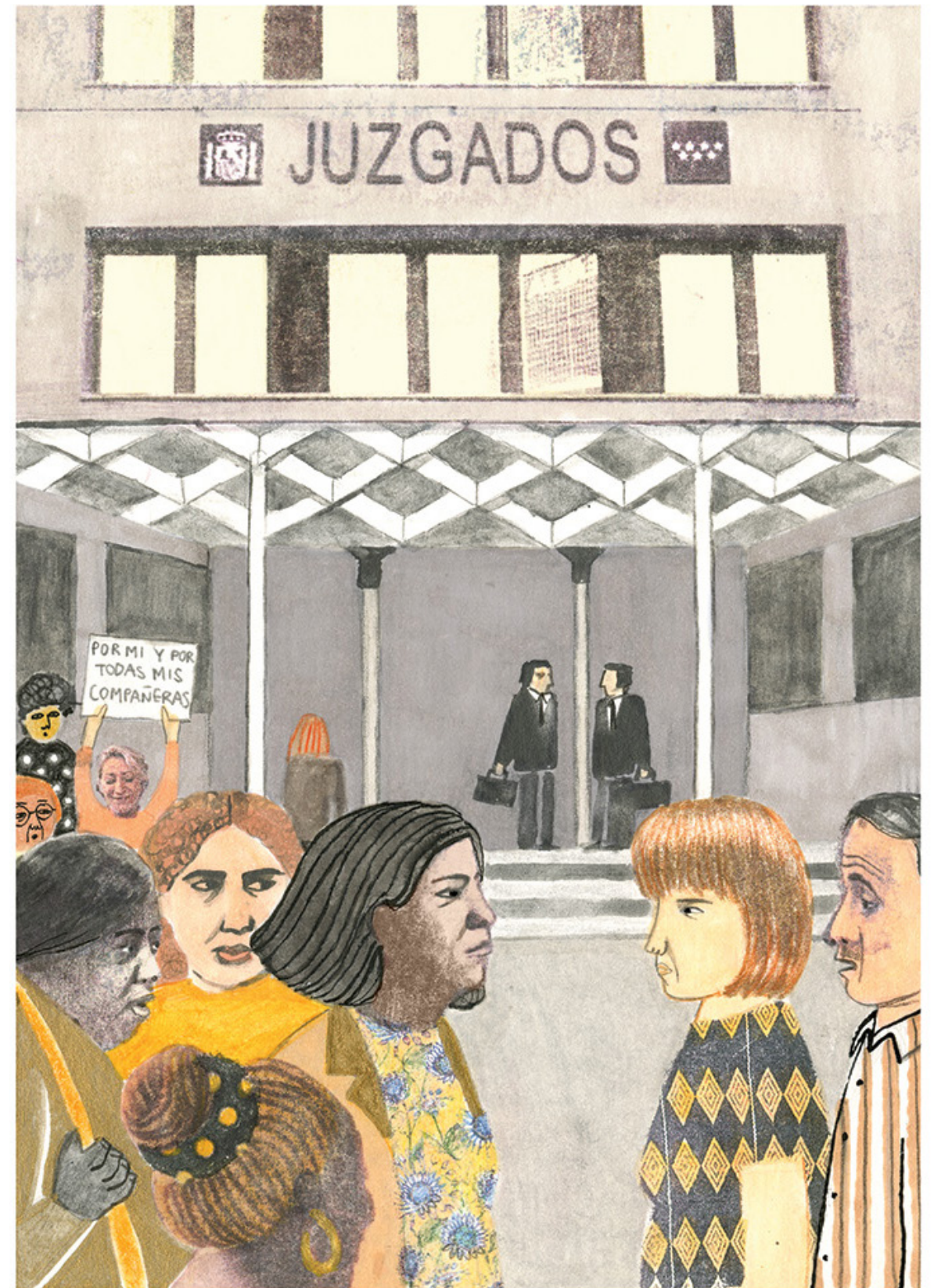
Every day we hear of someone who has been fired, who has been thrown out of the house in the middle of the night without their month’s pay or any kind of severance. We hear of compañeras who are verbally, psychologically and sometimes physically abused. For us, supporting and accompanying our compañeras who work as live-ins is a basic way of caring for those who care.

In a Territorio Doméstico pamphlet we made years ago and which—with minor touch-ups—we still use, we defined ourselves as a collective by naming all the things we are not, because what we are is open, dynamic and always in progress. When we say in the pamphlet that we are NOT ‘a legal advisor,’ ‘a job-placement office,’ ‘a social club,’ ‘a therapeutic group’ or ‘a picket line’ we explain our philosophy and our methodology as

a collective and self-organized space in which we build alternatives to solve our own problems together, and to change our vulnerable situation as women, migrants and domestic workers: we do not provide services like an NGO. So when we say we are not a legal advisor, we explain that we do provide legal support for each other to report the abusive and discriminatory practices we suffer, to file the necessary documents, etc. As a collective we have a lawyer, Arantxa, who has helped us for years with her legal support and advice. We have fought hard and won court cases: when a compañera decides that she wants to press charges, it means a lot of paperwork that we are generally not familiar with and due to our insecurity, we imagine we cannot win or get any positive results. Pressing charges is an intense process that requires persistence and endurance, and it requires collective support so the compañera involved doesn't lose hope, so she stays firm in her idea. This is a tremendous demonstration of strength, of constancy. To reach the end one must walk a long and twisting path, but when we do win it is an absolute triumph. And we say "when we win" because when one compañera wins a trial, we all win: not just all the members of Territorio, but all the feminists, all the domestic workers, all the women. So when our compañeras win court cases it is a massive adrenaline rush, a rush of hope, because we feel we've defeated a giant.

For this reason, one important point in our assemblies is to tell

everyone about our legal wins, so that everyone knows it really is possible: to empower us, so that we know and feel that we are not alone, that through our collective work and our form of organizing we can win a lot of things. The cases we've won give us strength and motivate us to press on. They are like a standard we look to that helps us continue our in daily battles and not lose heart despite the difficulties. In our assemblies and the training courses we organize we always do workshops on legal rights, because we are aware how important it is to know the law. Without this knowledge one puts up with anything, it is like learned defenselessness. For this reason one of the most important things we share with each other are tips, advice and strategies for confronting the abuses we suffer in our work: to keep and verify proof that we work in a given house, to sign and write "do not agree" on a firing slip, to make sure the firing slip shows the correct date, to inform your employee that you'll be speaking to a lawyer at an association you belong to. When we tell our employer that we are organized and have a lawyer we feel stronger, and this helps us be brave; it is a form of rebellion and resistance.



STORIES

EXERCISING RIGHTS

By Pepa Torres

The history of Territorio Doméstico is closely linked to actions against the violation of *compañeras'* rights. One thing that happened at the beginning was foundational for us: Latifa Baali, a member of the group, was fired. She didn't have papers, but after a collective legal consultation, she decided to report it. From the moment she made that decision we organized collectively to support her case. We presented her complaint at the Mediation, Arbitration and Conciliation Service in Toledo. We went together as a group to the negotiation and Latifa won it: as soon as the employer realized Latifa wasn't alone, she gave in to everything. Winning, and winning together, is intensely empowering. Since then, legal workshops and support for lawsuits have been key parts of our practice. Whenever we have accompanied a case collectively — except one that was totally blocked — we have won without having to go to court. Most of the time this has happened through mediation services, twice it was right on the courthouse steps. When people are not alone they can use the legislation, learn strategies for self-defense that are shared in workshops, collect evidence in advance in case they have to file a complaint, and even though they are in a situation of great vulnerability, they can build a lot of personal power. In domestic

work, a lot of the abuses are based in the invisibility and informality of the relationship. The employers never imagine that the domestic worker in their house is organized and has knowledge and skills. When formal demands are made, they usually accept. One Moroccan *compañera* had a boss who was an important figure in Madrid. She reported an abuse and his secretary called us, convinced that we would take the case to the press. But the worker didn't want to do that, she just wanted her rights to be respected, and reparations for the personal harm done to her. She was fighting for her dignity.

Abuse in domestic employment reached its zenith during the COVID-19 pandemic; we've seen *compañeras* who, after a month of confinement, were told "You can stay here for bed and board, but without pay," other *compañeras* who were locked into a room without the opportunity to go out, not even one day. Others were transferred to a new house without being asked, or were fired in mid-confinement and left out on the street with nothing. These are women who had been working 24 hours a day for 300 euros, women who had gotten sick and — instead of processing a medical leave for them — were fired, making use of the figure of "withdrawal of contract." In some cases these were women who had contracted COVID taking care of the families that employed them. The most serious cases were those people without papers or waiting for the resolution of a request for

asylum, people with very few local relationships or networks, who began approaching Territorio Doméstico in the month of May.

Most of these women were aware of their rights, but they could not exercise them. What does one need to exercise rights? One must know the law, have strategies for self-defense, find other sources of income, and have spaces for collective accompaniment. When you are fired, the damage is economic, but it is also something that breaks you, that fractures something inside. Many *compañeras* feel manipulated, because a lot of affect is in play in domestic work. Together we endow ourselves with tools and with energy. Whenever we encourage a woman to file a complaint after a collective workshop on rights, it is because we think she has a real chance of winning; we've never encouraged anyone we didn't think had that chance. We've recently begun a new project called "Embodying Rights" (*Acuerpando derechos*) in collaboration with a group of lawyers. The main objective is to offer counsel so that more of our *compañeras* can file complaints, because basic rights are being violated on an enormous scale.

Every time we obtain a triumph we tell all our *compañeras*, to spread the word that it is possible, that if we fight we can win with dignity, and we can seize rights that belong to us. This is a way to fight fear and impotence and submission. People think we don't have a chance, but this is why it is so important to tell the story. The

compañeras who have won trials have later become very powerful activists.

INSPIRING EACH OTHER

By Latifa Baali

My name is Latifa. I was born in Morocco and there I had various jobs, among other things I was a secretary in a construction company for five years. I arrived in Madrid in 2006 without papers, without work, and without speaking the language. I arrived with lots of ideas: I wanted to study, get educated and see the world. Through friends I found work as a domestic employee in Toledo. I worked there for three months, and on the third month they didn't want to pay me. With the support of Territorio Doméstico, I decided to report this. Territorio had just gotten started, there weren't many of us, but some *compañeras* had lots of information that they shared with the rest: Rafa, Pepa, Graciela, Marta, Débora, Arantxa... I was frightened because when one doesn't have papers, or the language, or confidence, one feels very afraid. I felt very fragile and didn't know what might happen, what the consequences might be: I had a lot of sleepless nights. Despite all of this, the support of my *compañeras* encouraged me to press forward with the charges.

We all went together to Toledo, to the negotiation, with a banner. Everyone got dressed up to impress. My boss, who always dressed so elegantly, showed up in a tracksuit without makeup and with a ponytail.

Even so, they agreed right away to pay what they owed me.

Winning made me feel very good. It gave me the sense that it is possible, that with or without papers we have rights, especially the right to dignity. Now I live in France and I know that this victory marked me for life. My compañeras inspired me, and now I want to inspire others. With or without papers, with or without the language, we are all human beings, we are all workers, and we have rights.

YES WE CAN!

By Marisol Acosta

My name is Marisol Acosta. I came from El Salvador when I was 19 years old, seeking a better future. It was hard to find work and finally, in February 2019, I got a job as a domestic employee. But the problems started right away: they accused me of losing their things, and the woman constantly told me that if it wasn't for her I wouldn't be working there, because her husband didn't like me. One day, in the morning, there was a problem in the metro and I got there 20 minutes late. When I arrived, the man was waiting for me and said, "My wife and I have decided to do without your services." They asked for the keys to the house and they gave me some money as severance. I didn't even count it, I just took it and left.

At that moment, I was frozen. They were businesspeople, and I was newly arrived, it was my first job. As soon as I managed to get myself together and count the money, I realized they had

given me only 180 euros for the two and a half weeks I had worked that month of November. I called my boss and told her she couldn't just leave me in the street without warning. She apologized, but that was it. Through a friend I heard about Territorio Doméstico. I wrote to the group telling my story, and they invited me to a meeting. I felt welcomed and supported, and encouraged to do what I needed to do: report them. I spoke to Arantxa, the lawyer. We did some calculations and I went to the Mediation, Arbitration and Conciliation Service, accompanied by Pepa, "We are Territorio Doméstico and we're not going to leave you by yourself." If I had been alone I don't think I would have had the nerve to report it, I didn't feel capable of it, I would have been paralyzed. But more heads think better than just one. In October the public lawyer called me to tell me that we had a date for the trial, but that the family was willing to pay what they owed me to avoid going to court. I accepted and felt very happy. I shared the news immediately with the group. I had been through three or four really hard months after being fired. Finally I found work taking care of elderly people, and the relationship is different. I feel they appreciate the work I do, both the people I take care of and their children.

Before joining Territorio Doméstico I did not feel very positive. Now I know that I have the support of the group, and I will not allow myself to be mistreated. I feel accompanied, and I know my rights as a domestic worker.

It is important to get organized so something like this doesn't catch you unprepared. When you work without papers, you think they can do whatever they like with you, but if you form part of a collective you know how to respond. Now I feel committed: just as they supported me, my commitment is to encourage other women domestic workers who are being repressed and who feel afraid, to help them feel that they can do it, that no matter how much power or money their employers have, they can still do something.

When I think of feminism, I think of support: as women we are not alone, and we must fight. There were women who fought for rights in the past, and we enjoy the results. Now it's our turn. Let's do it.

**FOR ME AND FOR ALL
MY COMPAÑERAS**

By Isaura de Rosario Santos

My name is Isaura, I am forty-one years old, I was born in Cape Verde and now I live in Parla. Before coming to Spain I had to abandon my studies because when I was 16 years old I got pregnant. I am one of seven siblings, plus my daughter, so to help my mother I began to work in construction carrying sacks of cement. Since I am the eldest in my family, I felt very responsible. When my daughter was two years old my aunt brought me to Spain and I had to be separated from my daughter until finally, when she was twelve, I could bring her with me.

I have always worked as a domestic worker. In my first job they treated me well. The employer was a woman who worked a lot, with two small children; I managed the whole house by myself which was a lot of work, but since I was young I could do it. After four years there I went back to Cape Verde to see my daughter and when I got back to Spain I changed jobs. I have worked in different houses, and in some of them I have suffered abuses. For example, I worked for three years in the house of a very powerful woman with a lot of money. She was a woman who really enjoyed humiliating her employees. I worked there during the day, and she mistreated me in every way. I did my job, but she never liked how I did it, and always made me do it over. In the beginning I didn't say anything, but I suffered, because when someone is humiliating you, you notice it right away. Finally one day I couldn't take it anymore and I said, "I'm here to do my job, but you have fun humiliating people, and that is not right." She was surprised: "What do you mean? You think you can challenge me?" "No," I said, "Just that you don't like anything I do, and there's nothing I can do to change that."

But the most painful situation was the one I had to take to court, some time later, with the support of Rafaela, Arantxa and all the others. I had been working in one house for ten years. Everything was fine until I got pregnant. I had agreed with my employer that while I was on maternity leave, my older daughter would substitute me at work. It was not the

first time my daughter substituted me, because she had covered for me in the past when I went to Cape Verde. But this time it was different because after a month my boss decided to release my daughter. Since I was on leave and it was her house, I couldn't do much about it. But I thought it was very odd, so when my maternity leave was almost over I called her. I found that she had "changed her mind" and didn't want me to return. Suddenly everything collapsed around me: with the baby, the mortgage, and now no job? "Why didn't you warn me?" I asked her. I went to see her and the only thing she did was give me the 800 euros as severance pay, though she owed me a lot more. Fortunately I did not sign the paper she offered me.

I was desperate. After ten years, I couldn't believe it. We had always gotten along very well. I can't explain why it upset me so much. With the newborn baby, I couldn't stop crying. I asked myself why, why she hadn't talked to me, why she didn't call me on the phone. But I didn't get any response. For ten years I had done all her work, managed her house as if it were my own; I had to think about what to make for each meal, what to give her three children, who were very polite, I was like a second mother for them. I almost never saw her, because she worked and travelled a lot. She always said, "I'm very happy with you, that's why I don't say anything." Her husband didn't say anything to me either. I was shocked and hurt to be fired like this. I had been going to work every day until four days before giving birth.

I called Rafaela and I told her everything. She advised me not to answer their messages until I had spoken to a lawyer. The two of us got together with Arantxa, the lawyer. I had my baby girl with me, and Arantxa had hers with her, and the two of them talked to me, giving me strength and security. Arantxa encouraged me to report them. At first I felt very guilty and asked myself "What did I do wrong?" At many moments I wanted to leave it be, to not get involved. I especially didn't want anything to do with the police. But the compañeras supported me, "Don't give up" "It's your right" "This lady knows she's done you wrong and she doesn't have any defense."

Rafaela insisted that the work I did was very important and that they had thrown me out as if I were worthless; no one took me into account. "Reporting the situation is so they don't do the same with anyone else, so they don't do whatever they want with the persons who work for them." These words, and the support of Rafa, Flora and Teo, the sense of safety that Arantxa gave me, the fact of meeting up with her and her daughter in a café and talking for hours and hours, all of this encouraged me to take the leap. Meanwhile my former boss invented a thousand reasons why it couldn't go to trial.

The day of the trial I was very nervous. But when I saw Rafa, my daughter, all my compañeras, when I saw Arantxa's face, and the face of my former boss—who couldn't believe I was so well accompanied—I felt really

strong. Its one thing to tell this story, another to experience it. My boss showed up all messy when she was always very elegant and well made-up. Arantxa whispered to me, "You can tell it's a disguise because the make-up she's wearing is super expensive." Their lawyer offered money. I felt weird accepting it, "I don't want to cause harm." But Arantxa said, "That money is yours. You know what you've been through. In fact, if we go to trial we could win more." But I preferred to stop there. I accepted what they offered, "That's it, we're done." With the money in my hand I felt powerful, I felt like nobody could do anything like that to me again. Also that my boss and her friends would think twice about doing that to some other person. There are bosses who don't value us.

Before all this I was very depressed. I felt alone. I had friends, but I felt disoriented in this environment, with my two daughters. But through Rafa I started meeting other women. She introduced me to some friends of hers in Parla. They came to visit me and made me feel supported.

I don't talk a lot, but what I feel, I feel deeply. I don't like to see anyone cause harm to another person, humiliate them, even if it is someone I don't know. It is as if I experience that humiliation in my own flesh, because these are things I have experienced. There is something in me that feels that injury as if it were my own. Getting organized is very important. Your compañeras support you in

every way, you grow in ideas, you learn things, it fills you with joy and strength.

GROWING

By Arantxa Zaguirre

I have been working as a lawyer for twenty years. I didn't particularly want to be a lawyer, but there wasn't money in my family so I had to study something "with a future." There was that popular Spanish TV series, *Turno de oficio*, so I thought I might like to be court-appointed lawyer. When I finished my degree I worked in retail and volunteered with COMRADE (an NGO focused on migrant rights). I ended up there because I saw an ad in which this NGO asked for furniture donations, and I showed up. I spent two years there, learning migration and asylum law.

I have been collaborating with Territorio Doméstico since before the group was established as such. It was 2000 and Luzmar, a friend and intercultural mediator in the district of Moncloa-Aravaca, proposed that I give a talk on the Special Employment Regime for Domestic Workers. I asked Marta to join me. I knew her from the meetings we held in Lavapiés in the Association of Senegalese Immigrants, with people from that association as well as the Association of Moroccan Emigrants and a few others. The space was called *Paso de Cebra* (Crosswalk) and it was run by various migrant associations. They were calling for the reform of the laws regulating migration. A lot of women that worked around Aravaca attended

that workshop, almost all of them were Dominican domestic workers employed in the single-family homes in the district. We started explaining the legislation that was in force at that time, a law from 1985, with the intention of making clear that the law was crap and that we should organize to change it. Much to our surprise, we found that every time we described a law that enshrined a miserably tiny entitlement to rights, they all applauded. It turns out they thought that we were explaining a series of demands we were making, rather than describing the existing law. And they thought it was all just great. “This is insufficient” we clarified. “But we don’t even have that!” they responded. We went home deeply affected by what we had seen. My grandmother had been an emigrant live-in domestic worker in her youth, and I thought how nothing had changed in seventy years. I guess that contributed to my interest in the fight for the rights of domestic workers.

Later we started doing workshops in the Eskalera Karakola. I remember a ton of women who worked as domestic employees together with the women of Precarias a la Deriva. They called me sometimes, whenever they needed a talk about labour rights or migration law, or to provide counsel in the case of a lay-off. In the beginning it all seemed very complicated to me. The women were starting from a very basic level in terms of their consciousness as domestic workers. They were exhausted, sometimes they ended up crying in the workshops.

They were hard sessions, really sad. I showed up to “do my thing”; I would come with a presentation all prepared and would start to give it, but suddenly—prompted by something in my presentation—one woman would start talking about an abuse she had experienced, and then everyone disconnected from the legal part and connected with the emotion. I found it very frustrating. These women seemed so defenseless, but at the same time I saw that they really wanted to listen, and to listen to each other. Right there in that group something was happening. It was like group therapy.

I don’t remember how much time went by from that time until they started to do demonstrations. I remember as a turning point one demonstration in the Plaza Jacinto Benavente in 2008 or 2010. Rafa was there with her golden earrings, a megaphone and a red jumpsuit: pure power. That image made an impact on me, the way she managed the stage. I’m sure a lot of other things happened along the way, but I remember that day as a flash, with the sense that something fundamental had changed. They were aware that they were participating in something collective, and they had the absolute certainty that if they didn’t get together and make demands, no one was going to do it for them.

Another landmark I remember was the event organized by UN-INSTRAW and UN-Women in which domestic workers were given a very central role. It was a three-day event in the

Reina Sofia Museum, very grand. There were a lot of people, it was a very imposing space: lots of specialists, lots of people listening. And there were Rafaela and Latifa, taking the microphone with great strength, openly demanding a reform of the Special Employment Regime for Domestic Workers and speaking as equals with all those theorists of feminist economics. Ten years had passed since that first workshop in Aravaca.

From the very early days of the group we began taking cases to court. I handled the legal representation, but the accompaniment was done by all the other members of Territorio Doméstico. This part was fundamental, and still is. As a domestic worker, you are all alone. You often live in a house that is not your own, and it is very difficult for a domestic worker to dare to make a complaint about her situation without a lot of support. In fact, those women that came to Territorio Doméstico and suddenly started recounting an abuse, a mistreatment, a humiliation: they had to be convinced to denounce. The situation is very unequal, and when you take someone to court you are putting yourself on equal footing with that person, and that is not easy, it doesn’t come on its own, you can’t do it all by yourself. The women of Territorio Doméstico did all the work of encouraging, supporting, accompanying. When they came to me it was because there was someone who was already convinced; I just did the technical legal explanation and presented the claims.

I remember a few great scenes. One very strong Moroccan woman, without papers, who worked as a live-in in the house of a very well-connected businessman who got a lot of commissions from the Madrid regional government. This woman without papers had been living in his house, taking care of his family, and the guy threw her out in a nasty way, without paying severance or anything. He threatened her, saying “I know the President of the country and I can have them deport you.” By chance, this woman ended up connecting with Territorio Doméstico. She decided to report it, and we began by presenting the claim to the Mediation, Arbitration and Conciliation Service in Madrid. The businessman came into the office all nervous, asking whether the case against him could affect his future contracts with the regional government. I remember seeing her, swollen with pride, her hand extended and her eyebrow arched, receiving each and every bill of the compensation and severance she was owed. I will never forget that image.

In court I have seen all kinds of things. There was even one employer who tried to turn a document that was signed by the worker as “do not agree” into a “voluntary dismissal.” There are employees who find it “inconvenient” to pay compensation and severance, but they must understand that they have a worker, and she has labour rights.

An added obstacle is the fact that the judges all have domestic workers, and the magistrates in the Justice

Administration all have domestic workers, so the process of pre-trial negotiation can be unpleasant: they call the lawyers and say, “Let’s get this over with.” You are there with a serious violation of labour rights, but they don’t acknowledge the gravity of it. It usually ends up alright, because if you’ve encouraged a woman to file a complaint it is because, according to the law, she is entitled. But you have to get around this attitude of, “What’s all the fuss about?”

One of the key facets of Territorio Doméstico since the beginning has been the fight to change the legislation so that domestic workers have the same rights as workers in any other activity. The first demonstrations already pointed in that direction, but in 2007 everything started to accelerate because the Socialist Party stated in the media that they intended to reform the regulations on domestic employment and improve workers’ labour conditions. Press statements came out from different parties, and there was a huge difference between what the mainstream trade unions were saying and what the domestic worker associations—who by then had a bit of a voice—were saying. The unions wanted domestic work to be organized through service companies. At that time, workers’ experiences in that kind of companies were not positive. The intermediary enterprises kept a lot of the money, so domestic workers preferred to continue having a direct relationship with employers. This model has a drawback: the

difficulty—if not impossibility—of participating in any collective negotiation of their labour conditions, according to the rules of the game established in the Law of Freedom to Unionize. The Royal Decree 1424/85 was not reformed until late 2012, with a reform based on the contents of Convention 189 of the ILO on Decent Work for Domestic Workers. To be honest it was partly thanks to the dedication and preparedness of the then-Secretary of State of Social Security, Octavio Granado. But just one month later the conservative Popular Party came into power and paralyzed the reform process. It took effect gradually, over the years. By that time Territorio Doméstico had achieved visibility in the media.

When, in 2018, Octavio Granado returned to the Secretariat of the State of Social Security with the Socialist Party government, he resumed the reform project and met with domestic worker associations. During the whole period that the PP had been in power, between late 2011 and 2018, they had not been invited to meet with any representatives of the Administration.

Even today there are still a lot of black holes in the Employment Regime of Domestic Employees, the most grievous of which is that they still don’t have access to unemployment benefits. In relation to this, in 2018 we considered undertaking strategic litigation. The idea was to encourage domestic workers in various provinces to go to the Public State Employment Service (SEPE) to request unemployment

benefits. Once they were denied the benefits, we would file a lawsuit in the labour courts claiming a violation of fundamental rights and alleging that the non-existence of unemployment benefits for domestic employees constitutes indirect discrimination on the basis of sex and national origin, which is prohibited by the Spanish Constitution and by European directives. When the labour judge went to render a judgement, since he or she would have to interpret European community law, there might be a request to the European Court of Justice for a preliminary ruling. But we couldn’t know if this would happen, or if we would have to continue appealing to the higher courts until it got to some magistrate who would do it. We didn’t actually do this strategy, but just recently I read in the newspaper that a group of lawyers from Lugo did try it, and we are now waiting to see what the European Court of Justice says.

Right now is a good moment to continue demanding improvements. The problem has been the pandemic shut-down and the economic crisis. Employers don’t want hiring costs to go up, and there is not much public aid for hiring caregivers, for example through the Dependency Law. Another problem is that there is no trade unionism for domestic employees. The legal framework itself, the Law of Freedom to Unionize, makes it impossible for domestic workers who do not work for intermediary agencies to participate in collective bargaining. In other countries there

is collective bargaining, as well as management and domestic worker unions. It must be said that organizing care work principally through hiring by intermediary companies has its disadvantages, as these companies are sometimes held by vulture funds or investment funds, and the conditions for workers are abhorrent. To do good union work in this context you need a strong union that supports you and can participate in collective bargaining, with many union representatives available to devote themselves full-time to denouncing abuses and mobilizing the ranks. Another way, which exists in some European countries, is to organize through domestic worker cooperatives. The final option is to continue with the present structure: with each employee working on her own and negotiating with her employers, unprotected. In this model, associations can support workers, but to turn this into the kind of unionism capable of participating in collective bargaining would require changing the law that governs unions. Domestic workers themselves have to determine which path is best for defending their rights and improving their conditions.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

AMALIA CABALLERO RICHARDS was born in the city known as the Pearl of the Pacific, Guayaquil, in Ecuador. An activist in various grassroots struggles, she had to emigrate to Spain over twenty years ago due to the bad economic situation produced by dollarization in her country. Mother and grandmother, feminist, matriarch of a home with three generations of women in Madrid. A self-educated woman who has always been motivated by the desire to learn new things: a seamstress since age fourteen, holder of a diploma in accounting, athlete in official competitions in Ecuador, clothing and fashion designer, with training in Gestalt psychotherapy and sign language. Since she arrived in this country she has done domestic and care work; she likes her work and values it as something fundamental in the lives of all people. On those grounds, and in the firm belief in the strength of collective struggle and the power of sisterhood between women, she demands full rights for all. She has formed part of Territorio Doméstico for over ten years and also forms part of Senda de Cuidados.

ANA ROJO DELGADO was born in Madrid, in the neighbourhood of Carabanchel, to a Castilian family that—like so many others—arrived in this city with the internal migration that took place in Spain in the 1950s. Since childhood she has been moved by social injustice, and as a teenager she got involved, first as a volunteer and then as a feminist activist in various collective projects: social, educational and ecological. She studied law with the idea of “knowing the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house”. She worked as a lawyer and, disappointed with the functioning of the justice system, she became an “equality promotor” within the local Administration. She feels moved by grassroots feminisms, popular pedagogies, social ecologies and all the transversal struggles against the barbarism of capitalism and borders. She experiences “artivism” as a way to bring other forms of expression and movement to activism. She loves music, forms part of the choir Malvaloca, and has such curiosity that she is interested in almost every human thing. She has formed part of Territorio Doméstico since 2010.

CONSTANZA CISNEROS SÁNCHEZ is the daughter, granddaughter and sister of fighting women. From a very young age her political education led her to participate in social movements and the Communist Party in Ecuador, where she was born. She participated in the indigenous movement and was very active in the first continent-wide indigenous uprising in 1990. With a degree in Social Communication and an elementary teaching license, the economic crisis forced her to emigrate. Since she arrived in Spain she has worked as a domestic employee, the first nine years as a live-in. Through a compañera in

the Association of Teachers Resident in Spain she found her way to Territorio Doméstico. Since the very first day she felt the women there would be her compañeras in struggle.

RAFAELA PIMENTAL LARA was born for struggle in a collective in the working-class neighbourhoods of Baní, activating solidarity in the fight for basic resources. She discovered feminism, popular pedagogy and political activism in Santo Domingo, in dialogue with many other women. She arrived in Spain the same year they killed Lucrecia Pérez¹³, and she participated in the demonstrations with many other Dominican women. Vallecas received her, and it was in this neighbourhood in the South of Madrid where she encountered European feminisms. She is a mother and a grandmother, a friend of her friends, a feminist and tireless activist for a more human and just world for all. She has been one of the motors of Territorio Doméstico since it began.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE COLLABORATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS FOR THIS PUBLICATION:

FLORA SUYEN HERRERA DUARTE is from Nicaragua and is the single mother of two children, sixteen and thirteen years old. In her country she was an agricultural engineer in a rural area, and she worked as a volunteer legal facilitator in her community. She migrated with the hope of getting her degree recognized in Spain and being able to work as an engineer, but since there is no agreement with The Hague and because she did not have documentation, she found herself pressed into domestic work. The illness first of her father and then of her mother, as well as her children’s studies forced her to stay in Spain to cover her family’s needs. Rafaela brought her into Territorio Doméstico six years ago. The group has given her a new family where she feels accompanied and acuerpada.

GINA CABO MOLINA decided to migrate at age 23, when she found herself alone with two children after separating from her husband. Her sister, already in Spain, sent her the ticket and got her a job as a live-in taking care of a baby. Her networks soon allowed her to shift to restaurant work, and then to supermarkets, but she will never forget what she experienced as a domestic worker; this is why she continues in the struggle. For her Territorio Doméstico is a place of unconditional alliance.

13. Lucrecia Pérez was a Dominican domestic worker murdered by a group of neo-Nazis in Madrid in 1992. It was the first case of murder that Spanish courts recognized as motivated by racism and xenophobia.

GLADYS MARGOT MARTÍNEZ MEZA, “Marga” is a hairdresser, but since she arrived in Spain twenty years ago she has worked as a domestic and care worker. She is a good football player, a fantastic dancer, and she likes to be organized. She discovered feminism in her home country in a women’s organization that addressed sexist violence. Territorio Doméstico freed her from the fear of saying what she feels. It has also made her feel proud of who she is and of her grandchildren, especially her granddaughter who participates as just another member of Territorio and is her greatest fan.

GLORIA PERDOMO GUZMÁN came to Spain seeking new employment opportunities because in Colombia, her country of origin, at a certain age all work opportunities are closed off for women, especially if they have a family to sustain. She has been in Spain for three and a half years working as a caregiver for elderly people, a job she does with joy and pleasure because there are a lot of elderly people that have lived hard lives and deserve the best. She dreams of returning to her country and reuniting with those dear to her. In Territorio Doméstico she has always found support, affection and inspiration.

JANICE RODRIGUES SILVA worked in a family business with eight supermarkets in Minas (Brazil), but it went under with the crisis of 2005. With the money she could salvage she paid her daughter’s tuition to study Physiotherapy and a ticket for her own migratory journey to Spain. Her plan was to work for two years in a supermarket, taking advantage of her experience, and then return. But her lack of papers forced her to accept work as a live-in, with just one day of rest each month. What were supposed to be two years turned into fifteen. She came into contact with Territorio Doméstico through Pepa, but she couldn’t participate more actively in the collective until she changed jobs. She wants her daughter, who will join her in a year, to have more opportunities than she had.

JULIANA GUERRERO RODRÍGUEZ is from the Dominican Republic. She arrived in Spain on October 5th, 2000 and the first few years were very rough because she did not have contact with any groups. She encountered Territorio Doméstico in 2011 and, together with others, learned to defend her rights as a woman and as a domestic worker. Her aim is to continue to grow in strength and power, and to be able to share that with other women: help them to learn their rights as women, mothers and workers. She is appalled that there are still so many forms of slavery, sexism and abuses of power. She never ceases to learn: she recently did a carpentry course and she dreams of having her own carpentry shop.

LUCRECIA DEL CARMEN SAINZ HERNÁNDEZ was, in her youth, an officer in the Sandinista Popular Army, impelled by her search for justice for the most underprivileged. She served actively in the defense of the country and was the first woman to found a troop of border-guards in the Northern region. She later moved to an administrative position as the head officer in the planning division. When the government in Nicaragua changed, all doors were closed to her and she had to leave the country. The year she arrived in Spain she joined a group of migrant women; from that group both SEDOAC (Active Domestic Service) and Territorio Doméstico would later be born. The only work she could find in Spain was cleaning and care work. From domestic work in private houses she moved to home-care, which is basically the same thing but with slightly better access to rights. She never forgets where she comes from and continues in solidarity with those in worse conditions.

MAITE ZABALZA is Spanish. She discovered Territorio Doméstico at the demonstration to celebrate the 8th of March in 2007, and she fell in love with the collective for its creative, political, feminist power. In 2010 she began to organize with other compañeras to denounce the racist round-ups of migrants, going to city bus terminals where live-in domestic workers without papers were often caught by the police. Ever since that time she’s been part of Territorio.

MARÍA LILIA REBOREDA SALGADO arrived in Spain thirty years ago from Córdoba (Argentina) and, like so many other newcomers, had to do paid domestic and care work for some time. Now by patriarchal mandate she does the same work, but unpaid. She feels this connects her to other women domestic workers. Territorio Doméstico and other activist projects she has been—and continues to be—involved in have shown her again and again that the fight for what we hold in common must always be in common.

PEPA TORRES PÉREZ From Madrid with origins in Andalusia, she lives in Lavapiés and is an expert in weaving networks of life that have care at the centre. She doesn’t believe in borders or their necropolitics, but she transits through them seeking to generate complicities and subversions and thereby eventually dismantle them. She has been part of Territorio Doméstico since its first days. She believes in the kind of bio-syndicalism we are trying to develop from the diversity and intersectionality that characterize all she does.

QUIZQUELLA RAMÍREZ is Dominican, with degrees in Law and in Tourism and Hotel Management. Single mother of two daughters and grandmother of a five-year-old girl she loves. Despite all her degrees, she had to begin from zero in Spain, cleaning houses. Territorio Doméstico taught her the value of all persons as human beings, and the power of uniting.

SARA MARITZA ALVARADO TAYLOR worked as a picture framer, a shoe salesperson, and a kindergarten and primary-school teacher in Ecuador. She holds a degree in Social Sciences and was just starting law school when she had to migrate to support her family. In Spain she found work right away as a domestic worker, a job she has continued to do for twenty-three years. Finding Territorio Doméstico meant finding compañeras, knowing her rights, and learning to fight for herself and others.

STORIES OF LIFE, STRUGGLE AND COMMITMENT SHARED BY:

Iris Portío, Isaura de Rosario Santos, Hipatia Gutiérrez, Paula Calderón, Latifa Baali, Arantxa Zaguirre, Marisol Acosta and Arantxa Ramírez Rosado.

REGARDING THE ILLUSTRATIONS:

The map on pages 17 and 20 came out of the workshop “Co-caring in Lavapiés” in which we participated together with neighbours, researchers, artists and activists from the Lavapiés neighbourhood in the pandemic months of June and July 2020. The Argentinian research and mapping collective Iconoclasistas led the workshop, organized thanks to the efforts of Ana Longoni under the auspices of the Reina Sofia Museum Area of Public Activities. For more information: <https://iconoclasistas.net/cuidados-comunes/>

FRAN CABEZA DE VACA created the image on pages 18–19 during that same workshop.

The rest of the illustrations as well as the cover design are works by Ana Penyas, in attentive and sensitive dialog with us.

ANA PENYAS was born in Valencia (Spain) in 1987. She holds a degree in Industrial Design and graduated in Fine Arts from the Polytechnical University of Valencia. A politically committed illustrator, she has received many awards: Special Mention in Iberoamérica Ilustra 2015, The VII Catalog of Iberoamérica Ilustra 2017, The FNAC-Salamandra Graphic International Award for Graphic Novel 2017, the best new author award at the Barcelona Salón del Cómic 2018, and the National Comic Award in 2018. Her illustrated books include: En Transición (Barlín Libros, 2017) and Mexique, el nombre del barco (El Zorro Rojo, 2017). She has published two graphic novels: Estamos todas bien (2017) and Todo bajo el sol (Salamandra Graphic, 2021).

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Robbie Blundell

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Rag by Dennis Grauel

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By
Rafaela Pimentel Lara
Costanza Cisneros Sánchez
Amalia Caballero Richard
Ana Rojo Delgado

In conversation with members
of Territorio Doméstico,
Liz Mason-Deese and the
Jeanneth Beltrán Observatory.

Translated by Maggie Schmitt
for Common Ecologies and
La Laboratoria.

