

MCWP RESEARCH BRIEF NO.1

WHEN WE FIGHT, WE WIN!

MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKER ORGANIZING AND ENGAGED INTERSECTIONAL RESEARCH IN CANADA

By Jennifer E. Shaw, Anita Minh, Alicia Massie, Cenen Bagon, Cassandra Cordero, Alice Muřage, Rincy Dominic C. Calamba, and Noemi Rosario Martinez as part of the Migrant Care Worker Precarity Project

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Image Source: Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, 10-094-S2-SS3-F4

BACKGROUND

This project emerged from a diverse team of labor organizers, community activists, and academic researchers seeking to understand the ongoing labor exploitation and new forms of precarity facing racialized migrant care workers in Canada.

MAIN ARGUMENT

We argue that by leveraging our different positionalities, skills, and priorities, the team was able not only to document the federal government's failed promises on permanent residence but also to transform research into collective action for migrant care worker justice.

KEY TERMS

Intersectionality: overlapping structures of oppression shape different experiences, opportunities, and disadvantages (cf. Crenshaw 1989)

Precarity: a state of insecurity often shaped by political and economic systems. Precarious status means a temporary and/or work-tied status in Canada. Precarious work means low pay, poor job security, and lack of rights and protections

CONCLUSION

Our team of labor organizers, care worker activists, graduate students, and academic researchers amplify calls from care workers for justice, to rigorously investigate structural injustices, and to turn our evidence into **actionable policy recommendations**. We press forward with the launch of the newest care worker pilot program in 2025 and evidence that **PR immediately upon arrival** best supports the permanent need in Canada's care economy and workers within it.



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QUOTES FROM THE AUTHORS

Bagon: "For me, this is a high-stakes project since care workers' lives are on the line with the failure of the Canadian government's pilot programs for care workers." **Minh:** "Our study... is rooted in a desire to identify contemporary processes to preserve racial and gender relations. It also tries to understand how these processes evolved out of a history of uneven racial and gender relations." **Calamba:** For care workers, "borders are the language requirement, the living-in, the violence and abuse behind closed doors, years waiting for their PR to be processed, and bodily pain from overwork." **Muřage:** "Power then became the unit of analysis, as opposed to the social identities of participants."

Cordero: "People's lives aren't changed by reports sitting on shelves...We align ourselves with the spirit of collective efforts toward change by sharing space, organizing in community, and developing policy and recommendations that make real progress and change." **Muřage:** "The project centered respectful and reciprocal engagement...This camaraderie was the most compelling outcome." **Massie:** "I'm definitely a researcher at heart, and I missed being able to expand my knowledge beyond purely practical applications. Through the MCWP, I've been able to bridge [labor organizing and activism with research] and reawaken my interest in academic research." **Rosario Martinez:** "Our knowledge mobilization events should include an action element: we don't just want people to come and learn, we want them to do something with what they learned. It's precisely because of our approach...that our knowledge production was so action-oriented."

Bagon: "If care workers are good enough to work here, they are good enough to stay with permanent status immediately upon arrival." **Shaw:** "As a team, we strive to meaningfully listen to care workers, intentionally talk with each other, call upon policymakers, and write factual and action-oriented policy reports. We cannot be sure how much impact our research makes, but by learning with Cenen and her years of activism, we know that change will continue to happen because "when we fight, we win."