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Nancy Zuniga, BS, MPHc  
Program Manager

Instituto de Educacion Popular  
Del Sur de California

Workers Health Program

Getting the Dirty  
Work Done:

Impact of Toxic  
Cleaning Products  
on Household  
Workers

# The Workers that Make All Other Work Possible

- Mostly poor, immigrant women of color
  - “Invisible” workforce
  - Undocumented mothers
- Historical un-regulated work industry
  - Work-place conditions (no contract)
  - On-the-job injuries
  - Abuse at work (verbal & physical)

# Who are they?

<b>Role in family income support</b>	<b>%</b>
Primary income earner	54%
Joint income earner	21%
<b>Support additional family abroad</b>	
Send money or packages to family in home country	72%
<b>Gender, race and country of origin</b>	
Female	93%
Latina	67%
Born outside of the United States	73%
<b>Years worked in industry</b>	
1 year or less	28%
2-5 years	41%
6 years or longer	31%

Source: American Community Survey 2006-2008 as analyzed by the Data Center.

HWRC Survey 2007 as cited in *Mujeres Unidas y Activas*, Day Labor Program Women's Collective of La Raza Centro Legal, DataCenter (2007, March). Behind Closed Doors: Working Conditions of California Household Workers.

Extracted from: Appelbaum, L (December 2010). "Why a Domestic Worker Bill of Rights?" Research Policy Brief. *UCLA Institute of Research on Labor & Employment*.

# How do chemical exposures impact these vulnerable workers?

- Cleaning Products (Wolkoff, 1998)
  - Disinfectants (i.e Bleach)
    - Borates—toxic to reproductive system
    - Sodium Hypochlorite—corrosive; dermatitis; eye irritation
  - Surface care (i.e “all purpose” cleaners, polishes)
  - Additives & preservatives (i.e fragrances)

Wolkoff, P., Schneider, T., Kildesø, J., Degerth, R., Jaroszewski, M., & Schunk, H. (1998). Risk in cleaning: chemical and physical exposure. *Science of the total environment*, 215(1), 135-156.

# They deserve the Right to Know...

- “My sinuses hurt... from the Clorox that they put, they didn't even give us masks, nothing...not even sponges.”- Household Worker, Pasadena, CA
- “My eyes burn...and I'm going blind from so many chemicals...they don't give us anything...20 dollars for two hours, for our eyes, our eyes cost more than 20 dollars.”-Household Worker, Pasadena, CA
- “I can't use Clorox...it gives me really strong headaches, even migraines, and I get a lot of nose bleeds.”- Household Worker, Los Angeles, CA
- “ My boss is very abusive, one day he threw 409 on the wall and it was in the direction that I was in and it fell on my face the 409.” - Household Worker, Westwood, CA

Richards, A., Gonzalez, R., Zuniga, N.,Rodriguez, M. (2010) “Airing Our Dirty Laundry: Community Partnered Participatory Research to Explore Occupational Hazards and Coping Strategies Among Latina Household Workers”. American Public Health Association Conference. Philadelphia, PA.

# WORKSHOPS

- We provide a series of workshops focus on how chemicals affect health.
- Chemicals at the workplace
- Chemicals at home
- Alternatives of use

# Women at a workshop



# Right to Know Policy can close gaps in Prevention efforts

- Low-control over work negotiations for better working conditions; includes cleaning products
- Right to Know can help increase awareness of Employers
- Right to Know can help advocacy groups provide better recommendations and alternatives for workers





Workers' Health is no (trade) secret...

We deserve the Right to Know how chemicals affect our health!



# IDEPSCA

- WORKERS HEALTH PROGRAM
- HOUSEHOLD WORKERS PROGRAM
- Contacts.
- Nancy zuniga [nzuniga@idepsca.org](mailto:nzuniga@idepsca.org)
- Angela Alvarez [angela@idepsca.org](mailto:angela@idepsca.org)
- Kryssia Campos [kryssia@idepsca.org](mailto:kryssia@idepsca.org)
- (213)252-2952 ext. 12