

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: FW: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 4.20.20
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From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Sent: Monday, April 20, 2020 9:29 AM
To: mojo210al@gmail.com
Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 4.20.20

WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 4 Cars 1 Truck 1 Dog Walker

Mondays are always difficult. My new favorite leisurely activity is only available on weekends. Spending [Saturday afternoon](#) with the WSJ and its glorious Review section and Sunday with the New York Times. This weekend was no different. From the lead article in the Review section (A World of Hardening Borders) to every one of the pages that followed, it was a spectacular afternoon of engagement. And yesterday was filled with the NYT's and particularly its Section entitled in its Sunday Review—"The America We Need." I suggest that both sections are important reads for those who are thinking about what the outcomes of this pandemic are truly going to be.

Shortly after a serious editorial about the project itself, on turned to the 4th page of the section to be inundated with graphs and charts that demonstrated that not only will America struggle after Covid-19, but that some will struggle much more than others. Focusing on income disparities as well as racial differences, the times painted a picture through those graphs and explanations of just how the gaps in our society indicate statistical outcomes that none of us should accept or be comfortable living with. Of course, our soon-to-be-doctor daughter in the house living with us now, immediately told her parents that she had little chance of living as financially successful life as did her parents. And if one lives only by statistics, she is probably correct. But statistics don't tell the entire story—and in a brilliant and obviously deliberate story on the two pages that opened together, the Times told the real-life situation not of a blessed millennial or a privileged boomer—but of a woman named Melissa L. St. Hilaire. It was the jarring narrative to counter the equally jarring statistics. But she isn't either a millennial with a physician's future or a boomer with a successful career mostly in the rear-view mirror. Rather, she was a domestic home care aide who was fired with the outbreak of covid-19 and who has been left almost completely on her own. The article is painful and is a powerful counter force to the tables and the charts and even the words that fill the other parts of those two pages which are to be read together.

At the end of the article, Ms. L. St. Hilaire says the following: "we need everyone to treat domestic workers like human beings. We deserve respect and seat at the table. Our work has value. Without us, you cannot do your jobs. Just as we need you to survive, you need us." For me, it was yet another reminder of how lucky my mother has been in the nearly 6 years since my father has died. With her continuing cognitive decline and now her almost silent world in which she lives, her life has

been mostly in the hands of Maria, a woman from the Philippines who has spent her time caring for our mother [24/7](#). My mom still lives in the apartment she and my father(zl) moved into in 1988, a year after they made Aliyah to Israel. She was until the covid-19 outbreak stilled the country, still going to Melabev most days, a most remarkable treatment program for dementia care in Israel. But since the beginning of March, she has been homebound and cared for lovingly by Maria. For most of the past 5 plus years, my sister has had the greatest familial responsibility for my mom. For most of those years, she has spent a night or two caring for my mom so that Maria can some time off. In the last month, it has not been possible. Maria has had to shoulder [24/7](#) care almost continually for 5 weeks. We know the value she possesses and the importance of her work.

I had Maria speak to our Synagogue Trip group in December 2018 when we were exploring the challenges that Israel faced with its neighbors and inside its own society. When she came to Hotel to speak, she said that she was very nervous--because of all her friends and associates who serve as home health aides in Israel, none of them had ever been invited to share their story. What a painful introduction it was. If you walk the streets of Israel, you see its elderly population cared for over and over again by devoted caregiver--most of them from the Philippines who have special visas to work inside the country. But like L. St. Hilaire, they too are domestics who simply do the work we can not or choose not to do. The telling remarks that Maria made and the compelling story she told was a highlight for many on that trip--even more so than the visits with Palestinian officials in Ramallah or the projects of Arab-Israeli cooperation in Lod. And why, because it was a mirror to our own face that she held up. A reminder that human dignity is not defined by a job or by wealth or by opportunity, but by inherent value of being created exactly alike--with the Divine image through human agency. And that all too often we all fail to understand. I know I have in my life and I can imagine the same is true for us all.

My sister understands that completely. She has worked hard to make Maria a central part of our family and I hope that Maria feels it as well as it impacts our own family. When our daughter left Israel, Maria gave her a blessing and was grateful for our daughter's regular check-ins on her baubie (grandmother). And yet, in reading the NYT's article on one domestic worker in America, I realized that none of us probably appreciate how stratified the world has become in the world in which we spend most of time. And so, I found a new cause that I ask those of you who read this to support-- The National Domestic Workers Alliance <https://www.domesticworkers.org/>. The NDWA was founded in 2007. It works for respect, recognition, and inclusion in labor protections for domestic workers, the majority of whom are immigrants and women of color. I ask that each of you make a donation of any size to both honor Maria whose work in Israel has been sacred to our family, and to SUPPORT the many L. St. Hilaire's who are the workforce that often is treated as if they are invisible but yet are critical in caring for our loved ones the world over. morris

Sent by my iPad