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### The American Nightmare: Sexism, Xenophobia, and the Treatment of Domestic Workers in Urban America

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THE AMERICAN NIGHTMARE:  
SEXISM, XENOPHOBIA, AND THE TREATMENT OF  
DOMESTIC WORKERS IN URBAN AMERICA

*Hannah Lacava*

*Mentor: Carol Camp Yeakey*

Urban upper-class households in the United States, like all households, are places where many societal constructs regarding race, class, and gender play out. Unlike most American households, urban upper-class households serve not only as a private sphere, but also as a workplace for 1.8 million domestic workers, 95% of whom are female, foreign born, and/or people of color. Because of their unique position working in the private sphere, domestic workers are vulnerable to many injustices, including exclusion from safety protections, limited access to health insurance, and no regulation for overtime pay. In order to paint a clear picture of abusive patterns of behavior, this study will begin by chronicling a history of domestic professions, documenting long-held attitudes and beliefs regarding domestic workers' place in society. Moving into the modern era, this thesis utilizes personal narratives, statistical figures, and media to explore instances of verbal and sexual abuse in urban upper-class homes. The research question posed is how does the societal normalization of sexism, racism, and xenophobia affect the interpersonal treatment of urban domestic workers in the workplace. This thesis further examines the wider constructs of sexism and racism, as well as the way they interact to gain an understanding of the lived experience of urban domestic workers. Ultimately, this thesis utilizes the aforementioned data to analyze and discuss several questions regarding the state of domestic workers in twenty-first-century urban America.