

No Dreams Deferred: Mildred Reid Mounger



Mildred Reid Mounger (1919-1996)
Born and raised on her family's farm in Gray County, Kansas, Mrs. Mounger became a prominent labor activist for domestic workers in California and Kansas. She received her education in the public schools of Lawrence and Garden City, Kansas. After World War II, she resided in California and Oklahoma where her husband was stationed in service. Throughout most of her adult life she was employed in a variety of service occupations. She also continued her formal education, receiving her high school diploma from Sacramento High School in California. During the 1950s, Mrs. Mounger became involved in organizing private household workers in Sacramento, California, who, like household workers across the nation at that time, were excluded from the protection of minimum wage and labor laws and from receipt of fringe benefits such as sick leave, paid vacation leave or unemployment compensation. By 1971, she established the Capital Household Technicians, an affiliate chapter of the National Committee on Household Employment in Sacramento. When she returned to Kansas she took up residence in Topeka where she established the Topeka Household Technicians. Always a community activist and volunteer, she became an active member of Topeka's YWCA, NAACP, Democratic Central Committee, the Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women, the Capital Women's Rights Organization, the Coalition of Grass Roots Women, and the East Topeka Community Development Organization.

Black Women on the Move, speech delivered by Mrs. Reid Mounger, ca. 1979.



Mildred Reid
I represent the household technicians, more commonly known as the domestic worker. The word technician gives us classification. To have been the invisible woman since the beginning of America. To have been the silent majority since slavery. The official statistics cite 1.3 million private household workers, yet our unofficial estimate is at least 2 to 4 million more, because there are many more who are on fixed incomes—many to live on, have to be supplemented by other means. Many of our women working at the end of all household workers are women, some of those women would like to be able to take care of their families. We have not escaped the kind of service, which is really in a way of caring for another person's home. We have been laboring under the minimum first and more last. The National Committee on Household Employment has a code of standards upon a model contract, a training program to upgrade the household workers through improved standards for working.



The Domestic Worker

Speech by Mrs. Reid Mounger, 1970s.
"I represent the household technicians, more commonly known as the Domestic Workers... We have been the invisible woman since the beginning of America... Many of our women working at the hospitals, nursing homes and various other jobs have to do household work to make ends meet... We desire to create a new understanding and appreciation on the part of the public..."

TOPEKA HOUSEHOLD TECHNICIANS
805 wood street
topeka, kansas
913/ 232-3031

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW...
ABOUT HOUSEHOLD EMPLOYMENT

The Topeka Household Technicians was established in 1975. An affiliate chapter of the National Committee on Household Employment, it sought ways to create an awareness of the value of household labor, to advance household work to that of a skilled vocation, and to establish training programs for household workers. Mrs. Reid Mounger served as president and director of the organization.



Mrs. Reid Mounger receives an award in Topeka, Kansas from representatives of the United States Labor Department, the elected Kansas delegation in Congress, and the Kansas Legislature for her contributions to improving the status of household employees, September 1976.

Letter from Margaret Costanza, assistant to the President, responding to Mrs. Reid Mounger's efforts to change the demeaning public image of household workers, October 31, 1977.
"Your observation that many workers became stigmatized because of their job titles is a valid one."

'I'm Not Your Girl!'

HOUSEHOLD WORKERS ORGANIZE

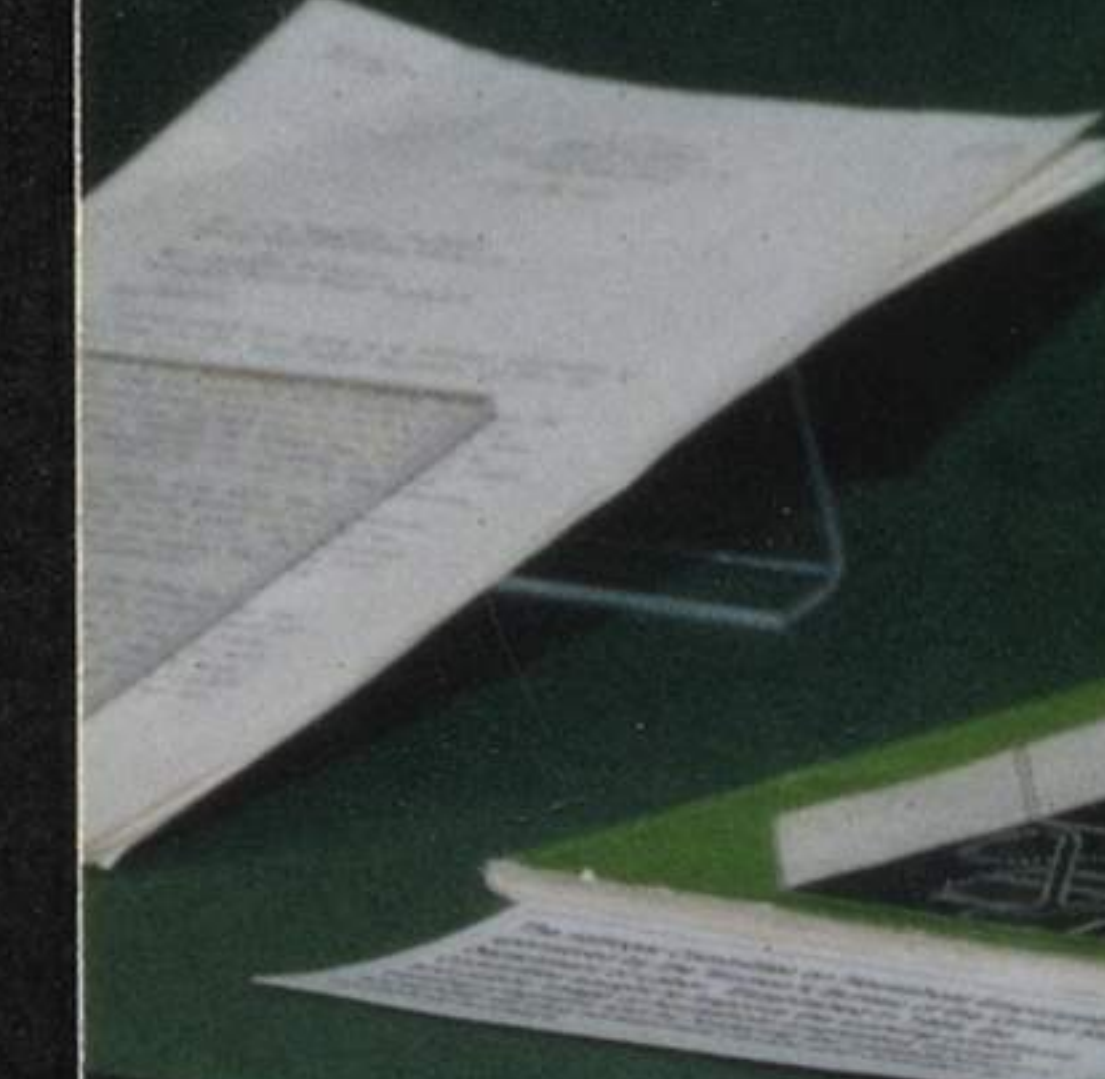
It took that long of an effort, but it was worth it. The household workers of Topeka, Kansas, have organized themselves into a union. The Topeka Household Technicians, a local chapter of the National Committee on Household Employment (NCHC), has been granted its charter as a local union. The NCHC is a national organization of household workers in the United States. The Topeka Household Technicians is the first local union of its kind in the state of Kansas. The union was formed by the efforts of Mrs. Reid Mounger and other household workers. The union's goals are to improve the status of household workers, to advance household work to that of a skilled vocation, and to establish training programs for household workers. The union is currently working on a contract with employers to improve wages and benefits for its members. The union is also working on a campaign to educate the public about the value of household labor. The union is proud of its achievements and is looking forward to a bright future.



Members of the Young People's Council in New York City, 1940. Mildred Reid Mounger is seated in the center, wearing a dark dress and a white collar.

Mildred Reid Mounger, 1940. She is wearing a dark dress and a white collar.

Why does NAACP need an end to the 'mammy'?



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