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May 14, 2023

"What Being a Member of a Union Family Means to Me?"

Being a part of a union family is embroidered into the fabric of my life. My immigrant grandparents raised my mom and her siblings on a union wage. My grandfather was a restaurant worker and my grandmother, a garment worker. Because of their union jobs, my mom's parents were able to save and send all their kids to college. When my grandfather passed away while my mom was a kid, my grandmother as a single mother was still able to pay her mortgage. Every month when she gets her pension check from the International Garment Workers Union IGWU, she tells me of the gratitude she feels because of her union family.

Seeing how hard her grandparents worked, my mom decided to be a public servant to help others. She entered the public sector and has been part of a union for most of her adult life. When my dad entered this country as a refugee, his future was uncertain. He obtained a job as a grocery work through the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. It was through this work that he helped his parents buy their home and raise his younger brothers.

Being a member of a union family means quality. Quality in the work produced. Quality of life that is generated from a union wage. According to the dictionary, quality means character with respect to excellence and grade. As a child that grew up in a household of union members across several generations, I see and recognize this characteristic every day. I see this quality echoed in the stories of my grandfather and this fineness in my grandmother's face. I watch it in the way my dad treats others and see it in my mother's work. Make no mistake, quality and excellence does not come without hard work, dedication, and grit. Union members know exactly how much courage and resolve it takes to stand up for a better quality of life. They know their voices are louder when working together for collective success. They know the value in a day's work and how this quality creates a ripple effect across households, families, and communities. Union proud. Union strong.