



UNITE
HERE!

Wilna Destin

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“Housekeepers have a contract...because I was there.”

New organizer celebrates her wins for immigrant hotel workers in Florida

Wilna Destin’s smile says it all. The housekeeper moved to Florida from Haiti looking for a better life. Instead, years after she first moved to the Sunshine State, she found herself working at a Disney World resort for only \$8.70 an hour. That was until she learned about UNITE HERE Local 737, a union that organizes over 14,000 Disney World housekeepers and food and beverage workers to fight for better work contracts.

At first, she was afraid to join the union. But after talking to three different campaign organizers who gained her trust, she conquered the fear of losing her job and started fighting for her right to higher wages and better working conditions. After months of organizing for a better contract, all of the housekeepers who worked for Disney World got an almost immediate raise from \$8.70 an hour to \$9.50 an hour in 2014. Housekeepers with more seniority could earn up to \$15 an hour by 2016.

Destin’s advocacy for better working conditions did not end there. Today, Destin is an organizer for Local 737, where she has pushed for improvements for workers at other hotels and tourist attractions. She is driven by her unwavering belief in the power of unions to make life better for working mothers and their families.

I didn't know anything about the union. And when I did hear about the union, I didn't take it seriously. My co-workers said the union wouldn't do anything for me. And I thought, "No. I don't want to do this because I don't want to lose my job. I have two children. And I have family in Haiti to take care of. If I lose my job, it's not going to be easy." But then some people from the union started to come talk to me about the union—what it is and what it's for. I went to a union meeting. And I felt that joining the union and fighting for better working conditions was something I had to do. I thought to myself, "I can do something for

The first time I went to a union campaign, we were in the middle of contract negotiations with Disney. For the first time, the housekeepers were very organized, and we won a lot of stuff for the housekeepers, like better pay and decreased workloads. It was a good contract. The contract negotiations ended on August 1, 2014.

Before the campaign, I was afraid and doubtful. Now I'm not scared anymore. Now I see it's good to organize. For the first time, the Latino and Haitian, and African American housekeepers, cooks, servers and dishwashers who work for

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my co-workers and myself. Together we can get a chance to do better.”

Organizing was very important to me as a Haitian woman working in the Disney resort. I saw how they treated people. It's really hard to be a housekeeper. You have a lot of pressure from your boss and manager to clean up to 17 rooms, up to 24 beds, 17 bathtubs, towels and everything. It's a lot of work and a lot of pressure when you're doing housekeeping. That's why I got involved with the union.

Disney World have a good contract because I was there. And we can do more! It's going to be better and better. Finally, I did something. That is what's good about organizing.

I feel so proud because our win goes far beyond the hotel. Right after Disney announced that it would pay workers more, SeaWorld and Universal announced their workers were going to get a raise. It's good when a family can bring in \$20 or \$30 more weekly. I take pride in my organizing work and victories.

It's very important for women to organize women. As an organizer and a mom, I can show you that I know how you feel when you don't have milk or juice for your children. The more we organize, the more we can live a better life.

In the future, we need to organize more black women. Sometimes black women think that unions are not for us. But we can do more. We

deserve more. We are hard workers, and we're proud. We have our families, and we have to support them more. And that's why we need more black women involved in organizing. It's not about being black or white. It's about what the future is going to look like for your children.

I would like to see black women stand up and fight for their rights. We can do it. Together.

Not me or you. Together. ”