



## ***With the Stroke of a Pen, Dominican Workers of Foreign Descent Become Stateless, Face Further Exploitation***

- **How Did This Happen?**
  - In September 2013, the Dominican Republic's Constitutional Court upheld the decision of a civil registry, which refused to issue identity documents or recognize the existing citizenship of a domestic worker, who was born in the Dominican Republic in 1984 to Haitian parents and registered as Dominican at birth. The Court also ordered the Central Electoral Board to review birth registries and retroactively revoke the citizenship of all Dominicans born in the country to undocumented parents as far back as 1929—potentially impacting up to four generations of families.
  - The ruling, which violates a binding decision of the Inter-American Court on Human Rights (*Yean and Bosico v. Dominican Republic*), as well as international and constitutional law, is expected to leave tens of thousands of Dominican women, men and children without a country. In addition to rendering them stateless, the decision leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and deportation and without access to basic rights such as formal employment, freedom of movement, voting, state-recognized marriage, property ownership, opening a bank account, higher education, and birth registration.
  - The international community, human rights groups and civil society organizations, including trade unions, have condemned the decision and consider it to be racist and discriminatory—as it primarily impacts Dominicans of Haitian descent, who have long been subjected to intolerance and mistreatment.
- **What is The Impact on Workers and Families?**
  - The Dominican Republic has long relied on Dominicans of Haitian descent and Haitian migrant workers to provide cheap labor in the agricultural, construction and domestic work sectors of the informal economy, which is characterized by low wages, no benefits, unsafe working conditions and weak legal protections.
  - Given the precarious nature of the work, coupled with a heightened fear of deportation, Dominican workers of Haitian descent are more vulnerable to rights abuses and are at greater risk of human trafficking, debt bondage and being compelled to take dangerous jobs.
  - Stateless children are often unable to enroll in high school and, as a result, often begin working at a young age to supplement family income. Consequently, they are at higher risk of engaging in the worst forms of child labor and other hazardous work.
  - While Dominican unions can advocate on behalf of all workers, the Dominican Ministry of Labor does not recognize undocumented individuals as union members, thus excluding this group from basic protections and negotiated benefits, including the pensions and social security to which they contribute.
- **What are the demands of the international labor movement?**
  - The Solidarity Center echoes the shared demands of its Dominican and Haitian union partners, the Americas regional body of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-TUCA), and the AFL-CIO in calling on the Dominican government to **comply with all international human rights obligations and immediately recognize the birthright citizenship of all Dominicans of foreign descent** deprived of their nationality by the ruling.