In the 1960s and 1970s, African American household workers established the first-ever national organization to represent them. They demanded “pay, professionalism, and respect,” won federal labor protections, and developed innovative strategies to mobilize workers who had historically been considered outside the boundaries of “legitimate” labor. Nadasen will explore their uses of history, memory and storytelling as they built a new labor movement that holds important lessons for how precarious workers organize today.

Premilla Nadasen joined the Barnard faculty in 2013 and is affiliated with the American Studies and Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies programs. She teaches, researches, and writes about race, gender, social policy, and organizing. Her most recent book, Household Workers Unite, examines how African American domestic workers in the U.S. strategically used storytelling to develop a political identity and through their organizing reshaped the landscape of labor organizing. She has won numerous awards and honors for her work. She is currently writing a biography of South African singer and activist Miriam Makeba.

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