

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights

April 1991

(INTERCEDE)

An international perspective

Feminization of Poverty

Impoverished women like me, desperately struggling to escape poverty caused by the continuing global economic exploitation of Third World countries..., have found ourselves in another ghetto of poverty by virtue of our being female and impoverished, of our being coloured, and of our being different in culture from the society that controls economic opportunities.

Based on my personal experience, in an employer/domestic worker relationship, specially if one is racially different from the other, there exists a traditional notion of viewing the position of an employer as having an aura of power; the domestic worker has the traditional obligation not only to serve, but also to please to get rewarded or to avoid being punished...

It is always the worker who must adjust to the needs of the employer; she is expected to be smart, extremely flexible and indefatigable as she performs her role such as babysitting and housekeeping at the same time. But..the employer expects the worker to be dumb and unassertive when it comes to discussing time-off, overtime pay and salary.

The physical and psychological demands of these conflicting roles make most of us domestic workers confused and absolutely frustrated. And yet, we are forced to these ascribed roles ... to survive the two years or more prison-like period of being without status in this country under the

Foreign Domestic Movement program of Canada Immigration.

The FDM is a classical example of a bureaucracy's perpetuation of indentured labour. This may sound archaic in this day and age, but it does exist...in the two requirements: we are required to live-in our employer's home...and we are required to obtain a release letter from our employer should we decide to look for another. These requirements technically bond us to our employers and blatantly disregard our right to determine where we would like to live as adults, and restrict our movement to better employment. These requirements that do not apply to immigrant workers make us prone to employers' abuses such as long working hours, uncompensated overtime, loss of privacy and sexual harassment. We are learning from (employers) the game of oppression...the painful experience of being uprooted from our homeland and of being separated from our own families. We are learning fast the necessity to educate ourselves to the basic truth that as long as there are a privileged few who are being oppressive, a corresponding resistance from the oppressed will follow.

We know we are like prisoners right now. We will find the ways. We have our eyes set on freedom.

(excerpts from speech by Pura Velasco, INTERCEDE President, 9th Biennial Conference of National Association of Women and the Law

INTERCEDE monthly meeting will be on Sunday, April 7, 1991 from 3-5 p.m. at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.(near corner Spadina).

A guest from the Ministry of Labour will discuss labour claims, and Nora Angeles-Richardson will discuss the Employment Standards Act.

There will be CLASP Legal Clinic. Applicants for membership or renewal must come at 2 p.m.; we don't accept applications by mail.

Health, Sexuality, and Aids

The Immigrant Women's Health Centre's Simone Hammond told INTERCEDE members at the March 3 meeting that taking care of one's body must be a priority for every woman and that includes knowing your body and knowing your right to decide when to have and not to have children.

She advised the women to make sure they have regular physical examinations including pap smear tests and breast examinations. The latter, she said, they can learn to do by themselves. She assured that community health centres like the Immigrant Women's Health Centre provide services that are more sensitive to women's needs and more holistic in approach.

Rhonda Hackett from the Aids Committee of Toronto, led a frank discussion about the need to protect against AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases. She led a demonstration about correct use of condoms and other devices that assure safe sex practices.

The audience asked a lot of questions about myths surrounding AIDS which Rhonda declared did not have any truth to them. "You don't get AIDS by swimming in a public pool, by kissing and hugging and taking care of AIDS patients," Rhonda said. You can get AIDS by having sex with someone who is infected with the HIV virus (that causes AIDS) and whose semen or vaginal fluids enter your body, by sharing needles with that person or by getting transfusion of infected blood. There is every benefit to knowing about this fatal disease so that you can

take the necessary precautions, she said.

Mila Paredes who coordinates the Immigrant, Refugee and Women of Colour's Project: Education Sexual Assault, talked about sexuality and sexual preference. Following are excerpts of her talk.

"Part of having a healthy sexuality is making choices about who we want to love and to have sexual relationships with."

"For me, one of the most difficult things about being lesbian (women who choose to love and be sexual with women) is being accepted for who I am. Canadian and other cultures reject us. There are many negative stereotypes about us,... all come from the assumption that we are abnormal."

"We are not abnormal. We are loving women in a sexual way because we prefer to love women. Enjoying a healthy sexuality means seeing that we are making a positive choice to love women. It means being proud of who we are!"

"There are very real risks to being open about ourselves (as lesbians). We can lose our jobs, violence can be done to us, our families can reject us or pretend we don't exist. Friends leave us, our communities reject us, sometimes we are sent to psychiatrists to be 'straightened out'."

"Because of our legitimate fear of being rejected, discriminated against or violated, many of us withdraw and isolate ourselves. We hide. But when we do this, we are accepting what others say we are, that we are abnormal."

We wish to thank the Employment and Immigration Canada (Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program); Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Women's Program); Ontario Ministry of Citizenship; Ontario Women's Directorate; the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (Community and Social Services); and the City of Toronto, Grant Review Board for their continuing support.

NEW SUBSCRIPTION: CHANGE OF ADDRESS: RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTION:

MAIL TO: INTERCEDE, 489 College St., Suite 402, Toronto, Ontario M6G 1A5

Please send DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS to:

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SUBSCRIPTION IS FOR 1991 ONLY.

Intercede Members:	FREE	Non-member Domestic	\$ 5.00
Non-Profit Organizations	FREE	Others	\$10.00

"Living in a healthy way means making choices about where it is safe to be ourselves. We do not have to withdraw completely. There are places that accept us. For example, if we like to be involved in a church, there are churches that accept lesbians and gays. If we want to do volunteer work there are organizations that welcome us, there are employers who will hire us. It is important that we make choices that we feel safe with."

(Immigrant Women's Health Centre tel. 367-1388; AIDS Committee of Toronto tel. 926-0388; Asian Lesbians of Toronto meets every first Wednesday of the month at 519 Church Street Community Centre at 8 pm. For further info re lesbian sexuality leave messages for Mila at INTERCEDE: 324-8751)

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Task Force on Sexual Abuse of Patients by Doctors

will make recommendations to the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Ontario:

- to improve how the College will deal with complaints of patients about sexual abuse by doctors;
- to change laws and legal procedures about such complaints;
- to educate doctors and the public about this subject;
- to set up guidelines for doctors about their relationships with patients.

If you want to share your complaints, your concerns or your suggestions at the Task Force Hearings on April 2 and 16, contact 961-3735.

MEETING OF DOMESTIC WORKERS ON OPEN PERMIT

Sunday, April 28, 1991, 2-5 p.m.

Cecil Community Ctr., 58 Cecil St.

We will discuss problems such as delays in obtaining landed status, housing, employment, UIC, etc.

Register by calling 324-8751.

¿COCO'S CORNER?

In my entry to Canada, my educational attainment was not declared, is it important to declare this during my assessment?

Answer: It is important to correct any misrepresentations about yourself re marital status, dependents or education. Before going to Immigration, it is wise to get in touch with INTERCEDE for some advise.

My immigration papers are being processed at the same time as my husband's & children in the Philippines. Do I need to sponsor them as soon as I get my landed papers?

Answer: While your application is being processed, your family will be asked to undergo Medical Examination as a requirement. You can sponsor your husband and children as long as you meet the qualifying criteria for sponsorship.

Do I have the right to ask for a salary increase, as soon as I have been with my employer for a year?

Answer: You have the right to negotiate the salary and working conditions you want to receive from your employer before signing a new contract or renewing a work permit.

Can I sponsor my undeclared dependents? I am under the FDM Program.

Answer: Make sure to correct any misrepresentations. Declare to Immigration information that you withheld before applying for permanent status. Then you can proceed to sponsor your dependents without problem.

Can I sponsor my sister, who is a widow, and her children? I am single and have no dependents.

Answer: If you are landed immigrant or citizen of Canada, you can sponsor them if you have not sponsored anybody and if you are qualified to sponsor them. For further info call 973-4444 Canada Immigration Centre.

Can I still file my T4 or Income Tax return last 1989.

Answer: Yes, just file and your return will be assessed

S P R I N G D A N C E

Cecil Community Centre

April 27, 1991

Saturday

\$5.00 per ticket

7:00 - 12:00 pm

**CONGRATULATIONS... to the Newly-arrived Domestic Workers
who attended the Newcomers Orientation Workshop
held at George Brown College on March 17, 1991.**

Career/Job Search Counselling

*for domestic workers in the FDM and on
open permit available during monthly meet-
ings, by appointment, tel. 324-8751*

*Ask for a telephone interview
if this is more convenient.*

If you need to talk to someone...

*about something personal
or if you need emotional*

CALL for an appointme

TEL. 324-8751

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Canada Immigration Centre	973-4444
Educ & Skills Training Ctr, Labour Council	971-5893
Employment Standards Enforcement	326-7160
Immigrant Women's Health Centre	367-1388
Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre	656-8933
OHIP Toronto	482-1111
Scarborough	1-800-263-3814
Mississauga	275-2730
Ontario Human Rights Commission	326-9511
Revenue Canada (Taxation)	869-1500
Toronto Rape Crisis Centre (24-hour line)	597-8808
Unemployment Insurance	730-1211
Workers' Compensation	927-9555
EMERGENCY HOUSING	
Nellie's Hostel	461-1084
Evangeline's	762-9636

LEGAL SERVICES

Parkdale Community Legal Services	531-2411
CLASP (Osgoode Law School) Legal Clinic	736-5029
Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Serv.	363-0304
Metro Tor. Chinese & SE Asian Legal Clinic	971-9674
Toronto Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic	971-8832

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place: 489 College St., Suite 402, Toronto, Ontario
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