

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights

April 1996



(INTERCEDE)

VIOLENCE STALKS MIGRANT WOMEN

by Carol Salmon

Benita's sacrifices better remembered

Benita De Sagun at age 37 and a mother of three was brutally raped and murdered on February 11, 1996. Let us grieve for her.

Everyday it seems that we are bombarded with stories of senseless acts of violence. Stories that come to us via the newspaper, radio, publications and in our conversations with others.

From the news media we learned that Ms. De Sagun came to Canada as a nanny seven years ago but had not brought over her husband and children yet.

But the rest of the media's depiction of Benita just seemed to victimize her all over again, which is another form of violence against women. Even in death her character is degraded. There is no mention of the sacrifices migrant women like her are forced to make as a consequence of the debt of their countries. There is no emphasis on stopping the continued assault, rape and murder of women by men.

It's ironic that Benita's life has been stripped away when she was on the verge of reunifying with her family after seven years of separation. She will be missed and remembered fondly by those of us who knew her well.

WHO official is hiding from justice

A young women working as a domestic worker in Malaysia to get money to finish her studies made a sworn statement at the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur on October 3, 1995 detailing acts of molestation and rape accompanied by threats and intimidation at the hands of a Canadian citizen. She has asked that her name be withheld.

Three days after she was hired by Dr. Paul Guo Hou Ming, an acting World Health Organization (WHO) representative to Malaysia, he reportedly deceived her into believing that he was a medical doctor and cancer specialist when he was only a medical researcher.

The Filipina worker's attempts to file criminal and civil charges against her employer for the abuse suffered between August to September 1995 is currently being challenged.

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You Are Welcome

DOMESTIC WORKERS AND CAREGIVERS

Live-in or live-out, caregiving in hospitals or senior homes,
on temporary or open permit, immigrant or citizen

YOU ARE WELCOME TO INTERCEDE MEETINGS EVERY FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH
(if it falls on a holiday, meeting is on second Sunday of the month)

Next INTERCEDE Meeting

Sunday, April 14, 1996 from 3 to 5 pm.
Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St. Cor. Spadina

Topic: **IF YOUR RIGHTS AS A WORKER ARE VIOLATED...**
speaker: Jan Borovy, Parkdale Legal Services

2:45 - 3 pm Member Application & renewals of Member ID 94-1379 to 94-1382 and 95-0001 to 95-0063

3:00 - 5 pm **FREE Income Tax Preparation** volunteered by Association of Filipino-Canadian Accountants
Make sure to bring your T4, Income Tax Forms, receipts, etc.
Legal advice and INTERCEDE counselling available

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Dr. Guo is attempting to evade prosecution by hiding behind diplomatic immunity. A defence, if won, would let this migrant workers' rapist go free.

NOVA (Network Opposed to Violence Against Women Migrants), a coalition of Philippine women's groups, has called on Dr. Han Sang Tae, Director of WHO West Pacific Regional Officer, to lift the diplomatic immunity enjoyed by Dr. Guo so he may be justly charged for the heinous crime he has committed in his private dwelling against a powerless, young women.

INTERCEDE, an organization that has fought and continues to fight for the equality and dignity of migrant women labourers has written to the foreign ministers, Lloyd Axworthy, and to Hedy Fry of the Status of Women Canada, asking that they intervene to bring a rapist to justice and to not allow the cloak of diplomatic immunity free him from prosecution.

CSW MEETING PASSES RESOLUTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) passed a resolution seeking to end violence against women migrant workers at its meeting in New York last March.

How effective will this resolution be? It depends on the seriousness with which sending and receiving countries of women migrant workers will implement it.

But migrant women and their advocate groups think

the resolution does not go far enough, even if it is better than nothing. They will just have to keep pushing and pressuring for stronger and stronger measures from governments that benefit from the labour and hardship of women migrant workers.

The fortieth session of the Commission was the start of implementing the Platform for Action approved by 189 governments at the Beijing conference last year. The Platform is a list of actions that should lead to equality of all of the world's women.

In this session's agenda the CSW discussed how to make women's human rights a part of all United Nations mechanisms and how the Platform objective to eliminate poverty of women can begin to be implemented.

The resolution on women migrant workers was drafted by the Philippines and co-sponsored by Fiji and Ghana. It calls on United Nations member states to effectively implement the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and apply it to women migrant workers. It "invites" countries that send and receive these women workers to promote and protect their rights and to ensure services that are appropriate to their language and culture.

The resolution "encourages" governments to ratify or accede to the International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. This Convention needs at least 20 countries to ratify before it can be binding on all UN members. So far only six countries have signed it. Canada has not signed.

Non-government organizations attending the New York meeting tried to include other major concerns to

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From Pg 2

the draft resolution. As a member of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, INTERCEDE worked in a Migration Caucus that proposed additions to the draft resolution.

These proposed additions echoed demands made by Migration Caucuses during the preparation meetings to Beijing and at the Beijing Conference itself. Among others, they included a call for taking appropriate measures to address the root causes of migration and forced labour of women migrant workers.

Proposed additions to the draft resolution also called for developing bilateral accords between countries that would protect women migrants' rights and security and provide procedures for safe and prompt repatriation and reintegration in their home countries.

They called on governments to create conditions that prevent discrimination against women migrant workers because of their gender, alien status and because they are poor.

Other NGOs signed on to the proposed additions but the draft resolution was presented in its original form, Filipino delegates saying it was difficult enough to get it through as it was.

On the very last day of the two-week meeting, the UN Commission finally took up and passed the resolution but with important revisions that weakened parts of the resolution. The revisions related to establishment and funding of UN mechanisms that would inform and monitor the situation of women migrant workers.

It seemed clear from the CSW meeting that money, lack of it, will be the biggest barrier to implementing the Platform for Action. Behind this barrier is the clear lack of political will on the part of member states of the United Nation to be true to their commitments to the equality of women.

ONE-STEP PROCESSING TO SPONSOR OR BECOME LANDED

Live-in caregivers of whatever nationality applying for landed status and Filipinos sponsoring families have been following a fast-track processing that is being piloted by Canada Citizenship and Immigration.

This pilot project, supposed to have started last November and possibly ended now, was being tested to

see if there can be less paperwork and less delays in the system.

INTERCEDE welcomes feedback or comments from those whose applications were part of the pilot project so that we can transmit them to the government and we can make useful suggestions on your behalf.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

A ONE-DAY WORKSHOP on Domestic Workers in the Live-in Caregiver Program

Sat. April 27, 9 am - 5 pm at 2 Carlton St., 5th floor (College subway)

Fee: \$100, \$50 (with request for discount), \$10 (domestic workers)

This will interest domestic workers, caregivers, feminists, anti-racist activists, community advocates, trade unionists, lawyers, immigrant workers, researchers professors, students etc..

Topics:

* Migrant women and domestic workers in the context of global economic restructuring and re structuring of the state

* Migrant workers' labour as part of Canada's global competitiveness strategy

* The live-in caregiver program - race and gender discrimination in immigration policy

Speakers: Beverly Richards & Coco Diaz (INTERCEDE), Sedef Arat-Koc (Trent University Women's Studies), Tracy Hefferman (Lawyer & Policy Advocate) and Nandita Sharma (NAC)

Register now. Call 483 - 4554

IT'S SPRING! LET'S DANCE, DANCE, DANCE

Saturday, May 11 at the Scadding Court
Community Centre
(Dundas corner Bathurst)
Tickets at \$15

ORIENTATION MEETING

On fast - track applications for landed status &
Sponsorship

Sunday, April 21, 1996

For information call 483-4554

YOU MIGHT BE MISSING SOMETHING IF YOU HAVEN'T JOINED YET...

INTERCEDE Caregivers Cooperative
Giving our best service, Getting the best benefits
Call 486-0548

VANCOUVER CDWCR

Committee for Domestic Workers' &
Caregivers' Rights
(an INTERCEDE Affiliate)
Contact Julie or Lorina (604) 874-0649

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Sunday, May 5, 1996

Topic: Faster One-Step Application for
Permanent Residence

Sunday, June 2, 1996

Topic: Opening Ontario's Workplaces
women, racial and other minorities

CARIBBEAN GROUP MEETING

Sunday, April 28, 1996

Call Tel. 483-4554

GRUPO HISPANA REUNION

Llame a Coco
Tel. 483-4554

HOW ARE YOU ADJUSTING TO LIFE WITH NEWLY-SPONSORED SPOUSES/ DEPENDENTS?

How can a Support group session help?

Friday, May 3, 1996 from 6 - 8 pm

Call 483-4554 if you are coming

We wish to thank the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Immigration Settlement and Adaptation Program); Canadian Heritage; Multiculturalism Program; Ontario Ministry of Citizenship; Ontario Ministry of Health; Ontario Ministry of the Environment; Ontario Women's Directorate; the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (Community and Social Services); the City of Toronto Grants Review Board, the Trillium Foundation, and United Way of Greater Toronto for their financial support.

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c/o INTERCEDE

234 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 205
Toronto, Ontario
M4P 1K5

FIRST CLASS

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Canada Immigration Centre	973-4444
Canada Employment Centre	730-1211
Educ. & Skills Training Centre	
Labour Council	537-6532
Employ. Standards Enforcement	326-7160
Women's Health in Women's Hands	593-7655
Immigrant Womens' Health Centre	323-9986
Immigrant Womens' Job Placement Centre	488-0084
OHIP TORONTO	482-1111
SCARBOROUGH	1-800-263-3814
MISSISSAUGA	275-2730
Ontario Human Rights Comm	326-9511
Unemployment Insurance	730-1211
Workers' Compensation	927-9555
Revenue Canada (Taxation)	869-1500
Centro Para Gente de Habla Hispana	533-8545

CRISIS LINE

Toronto Rape Crisis Centre - 24HR	597-8808
Assaulted Womens' Help Line	863-0511

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 Services	924-4244
Metro Toronto Chinese & SE Asian Legal Clinic	971-9674
Toronto Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic	971-8832

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place: 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 205,
Toronto, Ont. M4P 1K5

Time: Monday-Friday, 9 am - 4 pm

Tel: (416) 483-4554 Fax: (416) 483-9781

INTERCEDE STAFF

Coordinator/Editor: Fely Villasin
Counsellors: Columbia Diaz
 Carol Salmon
Intake Worker: Eva Jacob