

# ***DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS***

**INTERCEDE** for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers and Newcomers

October 2006

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554



## **OMNI TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY CELEBRATES MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS FIGHT FOR RIGHTS**

*By Anita Fortuno*

Good enough to work, good enough to stay! That was the call of migrant domestic workers in the early 1980s and the subject of Anthony Domingo's documentary, "Foreign Domestic: The Right to Stay". Since airing on OMNI Television (September 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>), INTERCEDE has been receiving calls, many of them emotional, from both current and former migrant domestic workers congratulating the organization on its' involvement in the fight for Landed Immigrant Status for Domestic Workers.

Prior to 1981, foreign domestic workers were brought into Canada through a revolving door policy which exploited cheap migrant labour and prevented these workers from obtaining their landed status. Unprotected by Canadian labour and immigration laws, migrant domestic workers and caregivers were denied many of the rights they have today. With no minimum wage, no status, and no employment rights or standards, migrant domestic workers were often at the mercy of their employers and vulnerable to abuse.

In 1981, a group of migrant domestic workers and organizations from Vancouver to Toronto to Montreal, comprised mainly of women and representing many different nationalities, banded together to fight against the abuses and inequities supported by discriminatory federal policies. For a whole year, this movement of domestic workers put tremendous pressure on the government through consistent, militant action by organizing street demonstrations, petitions and letter writing campaigns.

This resulted in changes that would alter the face of Canadian labour and immigration laws, and affect the lives of the thousands of foreign domestic workers to follow. The Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) program was born, which was replaced in 1993 by the current Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP).

Among those recognized in the leadership of this movement are INTERCEDE's own staff members, Coco Diaz and Fely Villasin. Coco, who was among the hundreds of heroic migrant domestic workers at the time, delivers a wise message in the documentary: "If you are really sincere about what you want to happen...plus determination, hard work and with the support of the people, there is nothing impossible".

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**Watch out for the repeat show of an English version of "Foreign Domestic: The Right to Stay" documentary film at OMNI 2 on October 28, 2006, Saturday, at 7 pm.**



## **INTERCEDE**

**For the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers and Newcomers**

*cordially invites you to its*

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

at Kapisanan Philippine Centre

167 Augusta Ave., Toronto, ON. (north of Dundas St. W., 2 blocks West of Spadina)

Sunday, October 1, 2006

- 3 p.m. Business Meeting  
4:30 p.m. **Topic: Non-Status and Live-in Caregiver Program Entitlement After Losing Status**  
**Guest Speaker: Macdonald Scott, Paralegal**  
**Carranza Barristers & Solicitors**  
5:30 p.m. Snacks & Refreshments

Whenever we look back on the lives of our own mothers, sisters and wives who came at that time and decided to stake their destiny in a fight for their rights, we can appreciate the hard-earned rights we enjoy today and the rights we still need to fight for. We must continue to fight discrimination against domestic workers and caregivers. Today, they are still fighting for the right to come to Canada as landed immigrants just like other workers who are needed in this country.

### **Message from voice mail....**

Wow!!!! I am so impressed to know that some of the INTERCEDE staff were involved in the policy changes that affected the lives of caregivers like me. I was not aware that migrant domestic workers and caregivers before me had no rights. I have relatives in Canada who also came as domestic workers and were able to re-unite with their family members. They were also unaware of the actions and involvement of other Filipino women as shown in the documentary film "Foreign Domestic: The Right to Stay" on OMNI television last September 16. - Alicia

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I saw part of the documentary film on OMNI television. I am a student at York University and I now fully understand the hardship and struggles of my mother who came as a domestic worker to Canada. My siblings and I are very lucky and grateful that there was a movement that allowed domestic workers like my mother to stay permanently in Canada. - Allan

## **BREAST CANCER AND CERVICAL HEALTH**

*By Anita Fortuno*

During INTERCEDE's monthly meeting on September 10, 2006, our guest speaker was Kim Dinh, a nurse from Toronto Public Health. She discussed and gave information on breast cancer and cervical health, and the importance of early detection for immediate medical treatment.

According to her, women over fifty years of age are more prone to breast cancer. Other risk factors include family history, environment, excess hormones (particularly for women who have not given birth) and lifestyle.

There are several ways to determine if there are lumps or abnormal growth in your breasts: through self examination, clinical breast examination by your family doctor and through mammograms. Although breast self-examination alone is not as reliable as clinical breast examination or mammography in finding breast cancer, it can help you learn what is normal for your breasts and how to notice any changes. Women over fifty years of age could avail of free mammograms at the Ontario Breast Screening Program by calling 1-888-939-3333. Many women are alive and well today because their breast cancer was found and treated early.

On cervical health, she noted the following risk factors: sexual activity, smoking, HVP (Human Papilloma Virus) which is transmitted through sexual activity, and lifestyle. Many participants were surprised when they learned that smoking can cause cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is usually a slow-growing cancer that starts in the cells of the cervix. The cervix is at the tip of the uterus (womb) and connects the uterus to the vagina

She advised that women should have a Pap test once a year, starting three years after first becoming sexually active. During this test, a doctor takes cells from the cervix which then get checked for signs of cancer.

Lastly, she recommended that everyone adopt healthy living habits such as exercising for 30-60 minutes a day, getting proper nutrition by eating healthy foods, maintaining proper hygiene, and avoiding stress and smoking. It is our responsibility to take care of ourselves and live a healthy life. Always re-

## **STORIES IN THE LCP**

*By Anita Fortuno*

Like most live-in caregivers, Vilma had no employer upon her arrival in Canada, because of the long processing delays at the Canadian Visa office in the Philippines, her employer decided to hire another caregiver who was already here in Canada. Fortunately, with the help of friends, she found a new employer who helped process her papers at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).

With her new employer she was hired to take care of an eight month old baby. After several months, everything seemed to be going well until she learned from her friends that her employer was looking for another live-in caregiver to replace her. She confronted her employer who then confirmed what her friends had told her. The employer gave her termination notice effective the following day and accused her of physically abusing the baby she had taken such good care of.

Vilma denied her employer's allegation but was told that a hidden camera, installed in the house without her knowledge, had given proof of her guilt. Her employer played the video tape and pointed to an incident where she was seen shaking the baby. She tried to explain that she was just playing with the baby but the employer did not believe her.

Upon Vilma's termination, her employer told her that she would receive her remaining salary through the mail. Later, however, they called advising her to come to their house that afternoon to pick up her paycheck.

Vilma went to her employer's home accompanied by a friend. They had no idea that waiting for her there were policemen in civilian clothes, and upon her arrival she was arrested for child abuse. Her companion started calling for help and they went to the police station where Vilma was detained. After two days in detention, another one of her friends posted a bond on her behalf so she could get out of jail.

INTERCEDE advised Vilma to apply for Legal Aid assistance so she could avail of services of Legal Aid lawyers free of charge. After several hearings, her case was dismissed due to insufficient and misleading evidence.

Vilma is relieved that the hearings ended in her favour, but the stress and pressure she has undergone is immeasurable.

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**Next meeting: November 5, 2006, 3-5 pm  
At Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.**

She is now looking for a new employer and looks forward to being a permanent resident after completion of the requirements under the Live-in Caregiver Program.

Live-in caregiving work is not an easy task and is potentially full of difficulties. Do your best to be prepared for all of its challenges.



**COCO'S CORNER**

After reading your stories about clients who have come to INTERCEDE, I would like to share my own experience:

My name is Perlita P. and I am currently working under the Live-In Caregiver Program. With the exception of my sister who lives in Toronto, I did not know anybody when I arrived in Canada. My employer was located in Barrie, in an area where I had no easy access to public transportation. It wasn't until a month after arriving that I asked my employers to give me a ride to the nearest bus station so that I could finally see my sister.

I assumed that in Canada the public transportation system would allow me to travel freely on my days off. Unfortunately, I ended up at the mercy of my employers if ever I wanted to see my sister or other nannies like myself (either in church, at Asian stores or through various gatherings).

Under this employer my workload was enormous. I worked long hours and the worst part was the way my employer treated me. She would always yell at me, use degrading words and treat me with little to no respect. I felt inhumanely treated by her.

I am a college graduate with very good communication skills. I tried to apply some of my psychology skills to my employer, but with little success. Her family members suggested that I just needed to learn to ignore her. However, I ultimately reached the point where I could no longer tolerate her abusive treatment and felt it necessary to discuss and bring forward my concerns. This resulted in the unceremonious termination of my job. I was given less than an hour to pack my belongings and I had to call a taxi to bring me to a bus station.

My sister advised me to call INTERCEDE. I was given an appointment and met with one of the counselors who then informed me of my rights under the Employments Standards Act. Luckily, I had complete records of my working hours, as well as the list of my chores and activities for the children I was looking after. I was amazed to discover the extent to which my employment rights had been abused (through long work hours, not being provided with a private room, working on holidays) and to learn that I was, in fact, entitled to receive termination and vacation pay.

The eight months I spent with this employer was punishing. Because I was here on a temporary work permit, it was not easy for me to stand up to my employer. With the assistance of INTERCEDE, I was able to file a claim with the Ministry of Labour and win my case.

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to all of the staff at INTERCEDE, and I would like to encourage other nannies and caregivers to not to be afraid and make sure to call INTERCEDE for information.

More power to the organization.



**IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS**

- Citizenship & Immigration.....1-888-242- 2100
- Canada Employment Insurance Centre.....1-800-206-7218
- Ontario Ministry of Labour .....(416) 326-7160
- OHIP .....1-800-387-5559
- Canada Revenue Agency (Taxes).....1-800-959-8281
- Canadian Consulate/ Immig -Buffalo .....1-800 267-8376
- Website: (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/buffalo/>)

**Human Resources & Skills**

- Development Canada (HRSDC) ..... (416) 973-6915
- Ontario Human Rights Commission..... (416) 314-4500
- Canadian Passport Toronto Office..... 1-800-567-6868
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Board .....(416) 344-1007
- Record of Employment Assistance.....1-800- 263-8364

**Community Centres**

- Community Information Services .....211 or (416) 392-0505
- Centro Para Gente de Habla Hispana.....(416) 533-8545
- Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre .....(416) 656-8025
- Tropicana Community Services Organization ... (416) 439-9009

**Women's emergency assistance**

- Toronto Rape Crisis Centre (24/7.....416) 597-8808
- Assaulted Women's Help Line.....(416) 863-0511
- Women's Health in Women's Hands.....(416) 593 7655

**Emergency Housing:**



- Nellie's (Women's Hostels Inc.) .....(416) 461-1084
- Evangeline's Shelter for Single Women.....(416) 762-9636

**Legal Services:**



- Parkdale Community Legal Services.....(416) 531-2411
- CLASP Legal Clinic (York Univ.) .....(416) 736-5029
- Chinese & South East Asian Legal .....(416) 971-9674
- Clinic
- Kensington-Bellwoods Legal Clinic.....(416) 924-4244
- Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic.....(416) 971-8832
- Community Legal Educaiton Ontario (CLEO) .....(416) 408-4420
- African-Canadian Legal Clinic..... (416) 714-4747
- No One is Illegal ..... (416) 893-4053

**Emergency** .....911

Your Doctor..... \_\_\_\_\_  
 Emergency contact person \_\_\_\_\_

**Important Web Sites:**



- Government of Canada..... [www.canada.gc.ca](http://www.canada.gc.ca)
- Ontario Government..... [www.ontario.ca](http://www.ontario.ca)
- Ministry of Immigration ..... [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)
- (info, kits, forms etc)
- OCASI ..... [www.settlement.org](http://www.settlement.org)
- HRSDC Canada ..... [www.hrsdc.gc.ca](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca)
- OHIP ..... [www.gov.on.ca/oc/ohip/](http://www.gov.on.ca/oc/ohip/)
- Passport Office ..... [www.pdp.gc.ca](http://www.pdp.gc.ca)

### JSW SUCCESS STORY

At Ninoy Aquino International Airport, I hugged my family for the last time before checking in my luggage and headed towards the immigration section. I was about to leave the people who were so dear to me and whom I lived with for the entire 25 years of my life and it was breaking my heart.

As the oldest child in the brood of five children, I assumed the responsibilities my parents passed on to me when they both passed away. The hard time my family was having in the Philippines pushed me into making the big decision of trying my luck in Canada. I arrived here in Canada in the month of May which, to this day, I consider the friendliest month of the year. On my very first morning, as I looked out of the window of my room, a passerby smiled at me, the sunlight was so bright, and the trees and plants were in bloom. I took all of it as good omen.

Here in Canada, I worked hard as a Live-in Caregiver for a family of four. Although my employers treated me well, I still met lots of challenges that I had to overcome. Overcoming these challenges was not easy, but I chose to focus on the bright side of things. Through my employment, I learned how to speak fluent English and Italian, I learned how to cook different types of dishes, and I successfully managed to send my younger siblings to school.

Over time I developed a more comfortable relationship with my employers. They started to give me more free time during the evenings after work, which I used for my self-development. At first I enrolled in a home school correspondence course and earned a diploma as a medical office assistant. Then I started taking other short courses to upgrade my skills. As months passed by my employers started to feel the need to have someone drive the children to their special activities. They decided to send me to driving school and I eventually drove the children to do their errands and anywhere else they wanted to go.

Four and a half years after my arrival here in Canada, I can now finally taste the fruit of my hard work. My employers and I agreed that their kids, now much older (16 and 18), they can take care of themselves. They gifted me with a second-hand two door Honda and a good job referral to one of their friends who hired me as front desk office assistant.

Life's not that easy, but with perseverance and the continuous guidance of Ms. Fortuno (an INTERCEDE Counselor) I have found a proverbial pot of gold.

### FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP FOR CAREGIVERS & NEWCOMERS

**WHEN: SUNDAY**

October 1, 15, 22 & 29, 2006  
November 5, 12, 19 & 26, 2006  
December 2, 3, 9 & 10, 2006

**TIME :** 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**WHERE: PROLEGAL**

164 Eglinton Ave. E., 3rd Floor  
(West of Redpath, Walking distance from Eglinton Subway station)

Please call (416)483-4554 ext. 30 or 21 to sign up.  
Seating is limited.

Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada

### INTERCEDE

**INTERCEDE STAFF:**

Address: 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 405  
Toronto Ontario  
M4P 1K5

Regular Hours: Mon-Friday 9 am - 5 p.m.

Telephone: (416) 483-4554

Fax: (416) 483-9781

Toll-Free: 1-877-483-4554

Web Site: www.intercedetoronto.org

E-mail: info@intercedetoronto.org

**INTERCEDE STAFF:**

Fely Villasin - Part - Time Executive Director

Jo Alcampo - Administrative Consultant

Columbia Diaz - Settlement Counsellor & Program Manager

Anita Fortuno - Settlement Counsellor

Bernice Small - Settlement Counsellor

Vicky Policarpio - JSW Facilitator

Genie Policarpio - Intake & Administrative Assistant

We wish to thank: Citizenship and Immigration Canada - ISAP and Job Search Program; the Municipality of Toronto CSP; and The Ontario Solicitor General's Office for their financial support.

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Snacks & Refreshments