

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

INTERCEDE for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers and Newcomers

September 2005

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554



ILLEGAL TO ASK MIGRANT WORKERS TO PAY OWWA FEE

The Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW), a civil society network that promotes the recognition, protection, and fulfillment of the rights of Filipino migrants, recently launched a signature campaign to promote the illegal mandatory payment of US\$25 fee by overseas Filipino workers (OFW).

Dubbed "Bayad Ko 'To," the signature campaign aims to gather evidence from past and present OFWs that indeed they were the ones who paid for their OWWA membership fees and not their employers.

The OWWA, formerly known as the Welfare Fund for Overseas Workers, was created by Letter of Instruction No. 537, signed by the late President Ferdinand Marcos on November 1, 1977. Section 5-A of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Welfare Fund states that foreign employers hiring Filipinos shall contribute to the fund, while Section 5-B stipulates that, "in no way shall the fees be charged or collected from the worker."

Reports indicate however that the US\$25 fee is routinely passed to the OFWs. For instance, OFWs who have their overseas employment contracts processed by the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) are required to contribute US\$25, or its equivalent, to the OWWA Fund before their applications are processed. Receipts issued to them indicate that the employer paid for the fee, when in fact such is not the case. The OFW after having paid for the membership fee does not get reimbursed for it.

PMRW President Carmelita Nuqui clarified that they are not advocating for the abolition of the US\$25 membership fee. "What we are questioning is the legality of collecting the fees from the employee instead of the employer."

"At the same time, we are questioning the provisions embodied in the omnibus policies which limit OWWA services to member-contributors only. OWWA was created by law to provide welfare services to all OFWs. There is no law which limits its services to so-called member-contributors only," Nuqui continued.

It will be recalled that last February 2004, the PMRW filed a case against the OWWA Board of Trustees, questioning among other things, the legality of the fees being collected from the employees themselves, and limiting OWWA services only to member-contributors to the OWWA Fund.

To date, the intensified campaign has reached PMRW's networks in Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, Korea, Taiwan, and Europe. About 100,000 signatures are expected to be gathered by September 2005.

"Bayad Ko 'To" campaign was launched on May 3, 2005 during the PMRW forum entitled "The Next Level: The Migrant Worker Sector Agenda," which reported on the recommendations of the 2004 World Conference of OFWs entitled "Shaping the Future of Filipino Labour Migration," held in December. Representatives from different local and foreign NGOs, government agencies, and media attended the said event.

INTERCEDE

cordially invites you to its

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St., Toronto, On. (south of College St., east of Spadina)

Sunday, October 2, 2005, 3:00 p.m.

*All Domestic/Caregiver workers,
Newcomers and those on Temporary Work Permit
are welcome to attend*

INTERCEDE MEETING
Every First Sunday of the Month

(if holiday, meeting is on the second Sunday)

Apply for/renew your membership - \$10.

Sunday, September 11, 2005, 3-5 p.m.
At Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.
(one block south of College cor. Spadina)

Topic: "Divorce" Facts for Caregivers

See you there!

LUNCH WITH "STUBBORN" WOMEN

There are women in the Live-in Caregiver Program who struggle against catastrophic illness and are managing to survive. But that's not all they have to worry about. They are also struggling to obtain permanent residence which they have worked for and richly deserve.

They are "stubborn" women who refuse to be defeated and they got together to talk during a lunch hosted by INTERCEDE one day in August..

Beni is one such "stubborn" woman. After an operation, she insisted on going home despite doctor's insistence to do more tests. Her strong faith is indicative of the mind's power over the physical body and its capacity for healing. Friends and employers are Beni's main source of support and caregiving. Today, she still works with the same employers who looked after her and she beams with pride at her "alaga" (ward) who is now a lawyer working for Judge Rosie Abella in Ottawa.

Meanwhile, Tess awaits her son's student visa and permanent residence. She suffered through multiple myeloma but resolved to summon all her energy to become well. She has conquered her illness and helps inspire people like Mel, who is undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer..

After noticing a lump in her breast, her friends insisted she get a mammogram. Mel had to go through several tests and wrong diagnoses before she found out the correct one. When she did, she was too shocked to ask even the simplest questions. But now she believes you need to trust yourself and your own instinct. And she insists on asking for a second opinion. Remembering her long distance call to give the news to her family, Mel cried along with her husband and children who just wanted her to come home. But she is one stubborn woman and she knew that with faith and determination she could live through her trials alone.

Now what would you do if you were told you had only two weeks left to live in this world? "Pamela" was told so about one year ago now. Although her cancer has recently metastasized to her brain, she continues to live from day to day with great spirit and hope. She feels fortunate to have a caregiver in Ralph, who did not mind that the conversations around the table were in foreign Tagalog.

For her part, feisty Lin has to submit to kidney dialysis on a regular basis. Because of her illness she has not been able to meet the 24/36 "timeframe" of the LCP. At one point she was ordered to leave Canada. Lin would not have it and she refused to leave, got herself a good lawyer in Lorne Waldman, and is still fighting to stay. After a car accident some time ago, Lin was kept in jail for six hours. She kept her cool and had dialysis in jail before she was set free.

Like Lin, Miriam is young but already on dialysis for a "bum" kidney. This has made her very conscious of proper food and nutrition. She shares her knowledge and warns against some "healthy" foods such as bananas, for example, because its high potassium content is harmful to people with her condition.

Counsellor Coco Diaz made sure to remind the women that health is their number one priority so they should leave worrying about their status in the LCP to lawyers and to INTERCEDE. She encouraged the women to continue supporting each other, at which point telephones and addresses were exchanged around the table. And so was born :

INTERCEDE Group of Special Friends

Next meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 20 at 6 pm
Assemble at INTERCEDE office and go together to
A LECTURE ON DIMENSIONS OF CANCER

7:30 pm at the Civic Garden Centre,
777 Lawrence Ave. E. at Leslie St.
Free admission and Free Parking

Call Coco at 416 483 4554 ext 23

60/40 RAFFLE

More Money for Christmas

**Win 40 per cent of total raffle funds raised -
And 60 per cent goes to INTERCEDE.**

Winning ticket will be drawn at the Christmas party
On December 4, 2005

Get your tickets now, the more you buy the more you win

CONGRATS FOR BBQ SUCCESS

By Bernice Small

Congratulations to the INTERCEDE Black Connection Group for doing a wonderful job of organizing their first fundraising barbeque at Earl Bales Park on August 13. The event drew about 120 people and raised \$755!

The menu at the BBQ included: vegetable rice, BBQ chicken, dinner rolls, cole slaw, garden salad and cold drinks. Also, there were games such as soft ball, cricket, dominos, cards and dodge ball. Members of the group participated fully by making sure everything went smoothly. They helped with serving, barbequing and making sure everyone had a great time.

The INTERCEDE Black Connection Group is hoping to have more fundraising events in the future. I would like to say thank you to the following: Karen Billingsy, Keisha Toby, Anneth Durham, Sonia Roberts, Nzinga Thamos, Lumengo Hillock, Matthew Augustus, Edward Robert, and to all the other members who worked very hard in order to sell tickets. Also, a special thank you to other food donors Beverly Richards and all our supporters who encouraged the group and believe in this event. Hope to see all of you at the Annual General Meeting.

If you are a Caregiver or a domestic worker and are interested in attending a Caribbean Connection Meeting please call Bernice Small at (416) 483-4554 ext 22.

**Next Meeting: Saturday, September 17, 2005, 2— 4 p.m.
at INTERCEDE's office, 234 Eglinton Ave. E. Ste. 405,**

INTERCEDE

Get-Together with Lesbians and Friends

Date: September 16, 2005, Friday

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Place: INTERCEDE office
234 Eglinton Ave. E., Ste. 405

For information, please call Genie at 416-483-4554 ext. 21

Q & A

Q - My husband arrived in Canada with our two children. Upon their arrival, my husband showed his usual attitude of being a chauvinist and was not able to control his temper and he verbally and physically assaulted me. I did not do any action and I just kept quiet, thankful that at least I have my two children with me now in Canada. Another time, again my husband assaulted me and this time I decided to report to the police. He was put behind bars and later bailed out by his relatives. He was given a restraining order. Our children wanted to see him. I am scared and don't want to see him. I do not want him in Canada, can he be deported?

A - I am sorry to hear the problem of your re-unification with your violent spouse. Report to Immigration the assault by your husband and make sure to accompany it with the police report to validate your request to withdraw your sponsorship of him. Then call the Assaulted Women's Helpline or INTERCEDE for counseling and referral.

Q - I am scheduled to visit the Philippines in December and I will be applying for a re-entry visa at the Canadian Embassy in Buffalo, N.Y. through the mail. Can I send a personal cheque for the processing fee of \$150?

A - When you file your application for re-entry visa, you can only pay by certified cheque or money order the US equivalent of \$150. If you file in the Philippines, you will pay in Philippine peso.

Q - Do I need to apply for an extension of my Employment Authorization that will expire in November even I have filed my Permanent Residence application in July this year?

A - Yes, you need to have a valid employment authorization while your application for permanent residence is on process. In case you also applied for an Open Employment Authorization, this will only be issued after your application has been processed and approved in-principle, approximately after five to six months.

Q - I decided to leave my employment because both employers harass me verbally every time they fight each other. Their neighbors are even aware of this. The day before I left my employment my male employer attempted to assault me physically and I collapsed. When I regained consciousness through the help of his wife, both begged for my forgiveness but I was firm with my decision to leave. My last two weeks' salary, vacation pay, T4 and Record of Employment were promised to be sent but almost two months have passed and I have not received them yet. I am concerned and want to prevent this family from having another live-in caregiver. Any suggestion?

A - You can call the attention of HRSDC since they approve Offers of Employment. Make sure to report in detail the treatment you experienced from that family. Also, you can file a claim at the Ministry of Labour under the ESB for your unpaid salary, vacation and overtime. Call INTERCEDE for an appointment and you will be guided on how to make the report or file a claim.

Q - My application for Permanent Residence under the LCP was refused because I exceeded by three months the required 24/36 time frame. Immigration refused my explanation that it was beyond my control. However, I still have a valid Employment Authorization that will expire in May 2006 because when I applied for an extension I sent a new Confirmation of Employment. I called Immigration and I was the given the option to either apply under the Humanitarian

and Compassionate consideration or to go out of Canada and re-apply to start all over again. I chose to re-apply and my papers were forwarded to the Canadian Embassy in Buffalo which gave me a date for interview. My problem is that US Embassy refused my application for a visitor's visa to present myself for interview. What will I do and can you help?

A - It is very upsetting the way Immigration decided against your permanent residence no matter that you are a hard working, honest and law-abiding migrant worker. Contact the Canadian Embassy in Buffalo and inform your inability to go for your interview because the US refused your visa then request for any of the following:

- ca a telephone interview especially that you have already a record as caregiver and a client ID number,*
- ca be interviewed at the border (Canadian Immigration in Niagara Falls)*
- ca re-schedule your interview and try again to apply for a US visa*

Call INTERCEDE for an appointment with any of the counselors to assist you.



Coco's corner:

These statements echo in my mind from a first gathering of some of INTERCEDE'S "special friends":

Benilda, happily announced, "I am cancer free for over two years and I thank God and the support extended by my employer who happened to be a resident doctor in the hospital where I had surgery for breast cancer". Her encouragement to the group was to always keep a positive attitude and treat everyday as a special day.

Melissa, when advised by her doctor that she had a serious case of multiple myeloma, felt the seriousness of her condition. "As if I was hit by lightning and the first thing that came to my mind, was that I need to be with my only son. With INTERCEDE'S help my son is now with me. I am full of hope that I can combat this disease."

Josie has been undergoing dialysis for over ten years now and several times had received notice from Immigration to leave Canada, "I am still around", Josie says. She is waiting for a kidney transplant and her medical bills have skyrocketed to almost \$100,000 when she lost OHIP coverage. Still, her information gave other caregivers confidence.

Pamela received an Open Employment Authorization while she was undergoing chemotherapy. "My oncologist certified last year that I had a few months to live. This supported my sister's application to come visit me. I look forward to a full recovery. My Permanent Residence is less important than my health".

Lilibeth was determined to go home last January when she was diagnosed with cancer and released from employment as caregiver for the elderly. Beth was sick, had no employer and no place to stay but as a member of INTERCEDE, she found good friends who provided assistance and moral support.

Now INTERCEDE is planning to continue a Support Group for our "special friends".

CAREGIVERS HAVE TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

What are transferable skills? Simply put, they are skills you have acquired in the course of doing your job and in most of your activities.

When looking for a job, it is important that you know all your qualifications for it. These qualifications are made up of the knowledge and practices you have developed and perfected as a worker which have enabled you to accomplish your assigned tasks.

The skills you acquire and develop in your work of caregiving are all "transferable". This means that you can use them to accomplish tasks required in other types of employment.

Make a list of all the skills you employ in working as a caregiver and you will realize that you are qualified to work at many other jobs because all these skills are "transferable". For example, as a caregiver you are responsible for many big and small tasks: cleaning, laundry, cooking, grocery shopping, bathing the baby, feeding children properly, helping with schoolwork, driving them to lessons or sports events, giving medications, supervising play, dealing with service people such as plumbers or repairmen, etc. etc...

All these tasks involve such skills as: organization and multi-tasking, communication and human relations, research and planning, management and leadership, initiative and adaptability, teamwork, and best of all, work survival. Work survival skills are the day to day skills that assist in promoting effective production and work satisfaction—being punctual, managing time, attending to detail, enforcing policies, accepting responsibility, setting and meeting deadlines, organizing, making decisions, meeting goals.

To know what skills to emphasize, you will have to research the company where you are applying and the job you're applying for. Then in writing your resume, focus on the qualifications you possess that meet the requirements of the job.

To learn more about transferable skills, register for free job search workshops at INTERCEDE.

FAREWELL AND WELCOME

We say farewell to Des Balce, outgoing Job Search Workshop (JSW) Facilitator who has left INTERCEDE and will lead a last JSW on Sept. 11, 2005.

Welcome to interim facilitator, Salma Saadi, who will lead JSW while we are hiring a permanent replacement.

FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP FOR CAREGIVERS & NEWCOMERS

WHEN: SUNDAY

September 17, 18, 24 & 25, 2005

October 2, 16, 23 & 30, 2005

November 6, 13, 20 & 27, 2005

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

WHERE: 164 Eglinton Ave. E., 3rd Floor, Computer Rm. West of INTERCEDE's office

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

Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada

INTERCEDE

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 E-mail: info@intercedetoronto.org

INTERCEDE STAFF:

- Fely Villasin - Part - Time Executive Director
Jo Alcampo - Interim Administrative Co-ordinator
Salma Saadi - Interim JSW Facilitator
Columbia Diaz - Settlement Counsellor & Program Manager
Anita Fortuno - Settlement Counsellor
Bernice Small - Settlement Counsellor
Genie Policarpio - Intake & Administrative Assistant

We wish to thank: Citizenship and Immigration Canada - ISAP Program and Job Search Program; Ontario Status of Women; the Municipality of Toronto CSGP, Maytree Foundation and Trillium Foundation grant programs, for their financial support.



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