



Tinig ng Bayan

Newsletter of Pilipinong Migrante sa Canada/Philippine Migrants Society of Canada

Volume 4, No. 1, Spring 2004

What is PMSC?

PMSC is a cause-oriented organization that promotes the rights and welfare of Filipino migrants in Canada.

The goals of PMSC are to:

- Organize, mobilize and raise awareness of issues faced by migrant Filipinos so that they are better able to defend their rights.
- Provide support to migrant Filipinos who need assistance.

A Brief History of PMSC

PMSC, formerly known as the Philippine Multicultural Society of Canada, was set up in 1996 as a support group for Filipino domestic workers and live-in caregivers. The initial objective was to work towards the integration of all migrant Filipinos and other ethno-cultural groups in the economic, social, cultural and political life in Canada. Some of the key activities were providing training and orientation to new arrivals, advocacy for improved laws and cultural or social events. In 2000, PMSC changed its name to Pilipinong Migrante sa Canada, renewed its mandate and broadened its focus. Its membership now includes all migrant Filipinos.

One of the biggest problems women from the Philippines face is corruption at recruitment agencies, which charge fees equivalent to many months' salary in return for an employment contract.

In November 2001, Marissa (she did not want to reveal her real name due to fear of reprisals) left the Philippines to seek employment in Hong Kong (HK). Her agency then charged her P70,000 and an additional P5,000 for a referral fee.

While in Hong Kong she was forced to work long hours and was not treated properly by her employer. She decided to apply to Canada under the Live-in Caregiver Program in February 2003. This time she had to shell out more than \$30,000 HK for placement and other fees. Marissa detailed the expenses to us as follows:

- Placement Agency = \$ 24,000 HK (\$4,330 Cdn)
- Medical Fees = \$1,200 HK (\$216.50 Cdn)
- Police Clearance = \$ 250 HK (\$45 Cdn)
- NBI Clearance = \$ 100 HK (\$18 Cdn)
- Canadian work permit = \$180 Cdn
- Airfare (HK to Canada) = \$7,000 HK (\$1,263 Cdn)

On October 2003, upon arriving to Canada and after paying more than \$6,000 Cdn to the agency, Marissa found out that she did not have an employer. It turns out the employer she was supposed to be working for already had a nanny.

Being in a new place and not recognizing a single face, she felt cold, nervous and alone. She did not know what to do, so she was forced to live in the agency for some time while they looked for another employer for her.

Fortunately, Marissa's story had a positive ending. The agency eventually found her an employer through posted ads. However, there are many Filipinas who are not so lucky. The PMSC comes across dozens of cases of women who have numerous complaints against placement agencies. The organization has worked with others across Canada to pressure the government to regulate these agencies to a certain degree of success.

May 10 election irrelevant to masses: PILC

This article was taken from www.bulatlat.com .

The Public Interest Law Center (PILC), a group of lawyers giving free legal services to grassroots sectors, has branded as “irrelevant to the masses” the coming presidential election.

In a May 2 statement, the lawyers’ group said that neither President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo nor actor Fernando Poe, Jr. - the top contenders for the presidency - deserve the people’s vote.

The group said that GMA, on the one hand, has given American troops free entry into Philippine soil and has supported U.S. wars of aggression, even allowing this aggression to spread into the country. In doing so, she has ensured the support of the U.S. in her election bid.

“The masses see that the so-called ‘intelligence’ and ‘experience’ which she boasts of as her edge over her closest rival are nothing but her brilliance at preserving her own hold on power and proven track record in carrying out the twin policies of globalization and all-out war,” PILC said.

“On the other hand,” the PILC added, “FPJ has

nothing to offer the people in terms of an alternative program of government, and merely relies on his popularity as a screen idol to propel him to Malacañang. The electorate is left to guess about what he stands for on the basis of his well-known association with the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, the disgraced former President Joseph Estrada and their cronies.”

The PILC also said that the prospect of Sen. Panfilo Lacson, “running for president to save himself from charges of human rights violations, corruption and suspected connections with international illegal drugs syndicates,” replacing Poe as the candidate of the united opposition is an even worse one.

“With GMA and FPJ at the top of the pack, the May 10 race is nothing but another farce,” the PILC said. “With the present election reduced to the false choice between GMA and FPJ (or possibly Ping Lacson) who are no different from each other, the electorate continues to be deprived of the opportunity through this election to effect even the smallest reforms in government and in society and make even the smallest dent on elite rule.”

Tinig ng Bayan
is the official publication of
Pilipinong Migrante sa Canada
(PMSC) and is produced and
published about four times a year
by PMSC’s Newsletter
Committee.

Newsletter Committee members:

Raquel Fragante
Maurina Joaquin
Diana Olayta
Cecilia Rafael
Eden Untiveros

For more information about
PMSC and its activities contact
Judy de la Cruz at
(613) 526-4801 or
visit our Web site at
pmscontario.tripod.com .

What’s going on with PMSC?

English: learning the Filipino way

English as a Second Language (ESL) is now one of the services that PMSC has to offer.

Classes are free for PMSC members and \$5 per class for non-members. Experience a curriculum that includes resumé writing, reading exercises and interview preparations.

Last session, 13 students registered, most of whom were PMSC members.

Call Aimee Bebos at 255-1921 or Joe Calugay at 841-7167 to register. Join and make new friends while learning the Filipino way among kababayans.

Christmas party sells out again

Filipinos are known for their love of music, dancing and food.

PMSC’s second sold-out Christmas party gave a fun-filled evening on a cold December night. With live entertainment from members, showcasing the public debut of the PMSC singing group. There was also dancing until midnight, it was a crowd pleaser.

The organization raised about \$1,000.00 from the event and will be used to help fund activities, including the English as a Second Language classes.

Immigration consultant guilty of fraud

An immigration consultant in Toronto pleaded guilty to three counts of fraud that victimized more than 25 live-in caregivers.

Cecilia Bautista Agtarap, who has an immigration consultant office at Eglinton Avenue West and a family health care service school, pleaded guilty to the three counts after negotiating down from 17 charges.

More than 25 Live-in Caregiver Program participants in Toronto filed their complaints with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) since 2001 and the cases were heard in the Federal Court last March 10 and 12, 2004.

Agtarap has violated an article in the Immigration Laws including fraud but because it was her first offence she received a light sentence which is considered a mere slap on the wrist by critics.

More complainants are coming forward, some of whom are now candidates for deportation because they were not able to meet the two-year live-in requirement within 36 months under the Live-in

Caregiver Program. Fake employers were employed by Agtarap to fool applicants into believing that they have employers.

Agtarap, according to the complainants, was paid from \$6,000 to \$8,000 U.S. in exchange of a 24-hour guaranteed employer to those who can give a full payment.

According to their testimonies multi-exploitation has been committed by Agtarap because they were asked to work under the table, violating the Live-in Caregiver Program. They were asked to pay at least another \$900 Cdn for her to give them another employer that does not exist. Agtarap also recommended clients to file refugee status if their stay in Canada is close for deportation.

On March 13, 2004, the Philippine Consulate met the complainants, together with the support group, the media, the service provider and an agency that extended help to the victims during their difficult time.

Filipino students give fourth LCP workshop

Carleton University Filipino Students' Association (CUFSA) held its fourth Live-In Caregivers Program (LCP) workshop on February 28, 2004, at St. Brigid's church in downtown Ottawa.

About 92 % of those who entered Canada in 2002 under the LCP are Filipino women. Many of these Filipinos are unaware of their labour rights.

CUFSA's yearly workshop aims to educate the workers of their rights, so they can better defend themselves when they face problems with respect to their working conditions.

CUFSA members Aimee Bebose, Yasmeen Khan, and Jericho Gapas talked about the roles of the Citizenship and Immigration of Canada (CIC) and Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSD) in LCP.

The question and answer portion of the workshop included topics such as open permits, sponsorship, applying for permanent residency, changing contracts, etc. The workshop was attended by at least 11 people.

For more information on the LCP, check out www.cic.gc.ca/english/pub/caregiver/index.html.

Did you know?

According to the Ontario Employment Standards Act:

- **Live-in caregivers have a minimum wage of \$7.15 per hour. After 44 hours of work in a week, employers must pay their caregivers overtime at a rate of time and a half.**

- **Live-in caregivers in Ontario are entitled to eight paid public holidays in a year (i.e. New Year's Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day). If the employer wants the caregiver to work on these holidays and the worker agrees, then the worker should be paid public holiday pay plus time and a half.**

For more information on your rights under the Ontario Employment Standards Act, visit their Web site: www.gov.on.ca/LAB/english/es/factsheets/fs_domestics.html or call PMSC at (613) 526-4801.

Babae, narito ang iyong mga anak!

by Pinong Pilipino

Paano sinusukat ang relasyon ng isang ina sa kanyang anak? Kailan itinuturing ng isang bata ang isang babae na kanyang nanay? Tatawagin ba kitang nanay kung ako'y lumabas sa iyong sinapupunan? Tatawagin ba kitang anak kung ako ang nagpalaki, nagbibis at nagpakain sa iyo? Paano tatawagin ng isang bata ang isang babae na "nanay" kung hindi siya kilala at di nakasama sa kanyang paglaki? Kailan mo bibigkasin ang mga katagang,"Babae, narito ang iyong anak!"

Nakatalungko si Dahlia sa harap ng bintana sa apartment ng kanyang kapatid sa Mandaluyong. Sa bahagyang siwang ay tanaw ang mga bata sa lansangan. Malaya silang nagtatampisaw sa tubig-ulan na kapapatak pa lamang. Naalaala ni Dahlia ang kanyang mga anak. Magkikita sila sa araw na ito pagkalipas ng limang taong paghihiwalay. Sinundo sila mula sa probinya. Hindi alam ng mga bata na makikita nila ang kanilang mommy sa araw na iyon. Sa loob ng 5 taon, lumaki sila sa kanilang lola. Samantala, si Rosal, ang batang kapatid ni Dahlia, ang kinilalang pangalawang ina ng mga bata. Nagtrabaho si Rosal sa isang bahay ampunan. Sa kabila nito, sinikap niyang dalawin ang mga bata sa probinsya kahit isang beses sa isang buwan.

Naging kainip-inip kay Dahlia ang bawat sandali ng paghihintay. Isang oras na lang at makikita na niya ang kanyang mga anak. Inihanda niya ang ilang pasalubong. May kaba sa kanyang dibdib. Pareho nang naramdaman niya ng siya'y umalis sa bansa. Matindi ang pag-aalala. Paano kung di na siya kilala ng mga bata? Paano kung tumanggi sila sa kanyang mga yakap? Ang ngiti kaya ng kanyang bunso ng huli niya itong hagkan sa airport ay naroon pa rin? Paano niya ipapaliwanag na ayaw na niyang makisama sa kanyang asawa? Saan magsisimulang bubuuin ang pira-pirasong pangarap? Paano duduktungan ang naputol na relasyon sa pagitan ng isang magulang at anak?

Nasa ganitong pagmumuni si Dahlia ng marinig niya ang ingay sa ibaba. Dumating na sila. Kasama ang kanyang biyenang babae at ang kanyang nakababatang kapatid na sumundo sa kanila.

Ang kapatid niyang panganay na naninirahan sa Canada ay nagbabakasyon di sa Pilipinas sa panahong iyon. Samantala, nasa loob pa ng kuwarto si Dahlia, kinausap ng kanyang kapatid na panganay ang kanyang biyenan at ipinaliwanag ang buong sitwasyon pati na ang kanyang plano. Hindi na makikipagkita si Dahlia sa asawa. Wala na silang dapat pag-usapan pa sapagkat may kinakasama na itong iba. Ang mga bata ay mananatili muna sa kanyang biyenan sa probinsya upang ituloy ang pag-aaral. Tutulong si Dahlia sa mga gastusin sa pamamagitan ng konting naipon sa Saudi. Maghahanap siyang muli ng trabaho sa Maynila habang naghahanda siya ng mga papeles patungong Canada. Kailangang harapin niya ang katotohanan na kahit sa sariling bansa, hindi pa rin niya makakasama ang kanyang mga anak.

Nang maiayos na ang lahat, lumabas si Dahlia mula sa kuwarto. Ang 14 na taong panganay at 11 taong pangalawa ay kaagad na sumalubong at yumakap. Nagdikit ang mga luha ng pananabik sa isa't isa. Pinawi ang limang taong pangungulila at mga pangako. Samantala ang pangatlo na ngayon ay siyam na taong gulang ang edad ay nanatiling nakatingin lamang. Di nagsikap na humakbang o lumapit sa isang babae na sinasabing kanyang ina. Ang pitong taong gulang na bunso ay mabilis na humakbang papalapit. Ngunit hindi kay Dahlia.

Yumapos ito sa kanyang Tita Rosal, ang kanyang kinikilalang "mommy." Inakay ni Rosal ang bunso, palapit kay Dahlia. Diego, siya ang tunay mong mommy. Inilabas ni Dahlia ang isang litrato ng huli nilang paghihiwalay. Nagyakap ang mag-ina. At muling bumukal ang isang bagong ugnayan sa pagitan ng isang babae at kanyang anak. (Itutuloy)

Send us your comments, questions and feedback about our newsletter or activities at PMSC's email at: pmsc_1@hotmail.com or post your thoughts on the message forum of our Web site: pmscontario.tripod.com .