

I
HAVE
27 HOUSE
KEYS

JK WIL
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vriend
'die hun I
makkelijk maakt
MING
A
UMBER'AY...
VORK,
Vij BELASTING
V BETALEN

WERKWOORDEN - WORDS OF LABOUR

mijn
werkgevers
Zetten koffie
voor me

WERK
WOORDEN
-
WORDS OF
LABOUR

**WERK
WOORDEN**
-
**WORDS OF
LABOUR**

COLOFON

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AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

On november 2nd 2013, a large group of domestic workers held a joint demonstration with their employers, in the Museumkwartier in Amsterdam. Their protest signs carried slogans such as: 'I like to pay tax', 'We take care of your children', 'I have 27 house keys' and, most prominently, 'Ratify ILO convention 189 now!'

This was the first occasion in the Netherlands where these workers became visible as a group. Already two years before, the International Labour Conference in Geneva had adopted ILO convention 189; an agreement which states that domestic workers have all the same labour rights as regular workers. The Dutch government also voted for adoption of this treaty. However, other than in the neighbouring countries, it has still not been ratified. The majority of domestic workers continue to live and work in the shadow zone of our society.

Where do they come from and how long have they lived among us? 'Words of Labour' is a collection of some essential terms from the ILO convention 189, accompanied by stories from domestic workers, stories which throw light on the invisible realities behind those words.

TEN GELEIDE

Op 2 november 2013 demonstreerde een grote groep huishoudelijk werkers samen met hun werkgevers in het Amsterdamse Museumkwartier. Op hun protestborden waren teksten te lezen als: 'Ik wil belasting betalen', 'Wij zorgen voor jullie kinderen', 'Ik heb 27 huissleutels' en bovenal: 'Ratificeer ILO conventie 189 nu!'

Het was voor het eerst in Nederland dat deze werkers als groep zichtbaar waren. Al twee jaar eerder was op de Internationale Arbeidsconferentie in Genève het ILO-verdrag 189 aangenomen; een verdrag dat aan huishoudelijk werkers dezelfde arbeidsrechten toekent als aan reguliere werknemers. Ook de Nederlandse regering stemde voor aanname van dit verdrag. Desondanks is het hier in tegenstelling tot onze buurlanden nog steeds niet geratificeerd. De meerderheid van huishoudelijk werkers bevindt zich nog steeds in de schaduw van onze samenleving.

Waar komen zij vandaan en hoe lang wonen zij al naast ons? 'Werk Woorden' is een collectie van enkele essentiële termen uit het ILO-verdrag 189 vergezeld door verhalen van huishoudelijk werkers, verhalen die de onzichtbare realiteit achter deze woorden belichten.

INDEX

- preface* 08
- voorwoord* 09

- contract 17
- employer 19
 - work 21
- overtime compensation 23
 - workplace 25
 - health 27
 - worker 29
- labour migration 31
 - family 33
 - invisible 35
 - safe 37
 - repatriation 39
 - children 41
- identity documents 43
 - women 45
- minimum wage 47
 - recruitment 49
- working environment 51
 - domestic work 53
- termination of employment 55
 - migrants 57
 - money transfer 59
 - equal treatment 61
 - travel 63
- weekly rest period 65

- bank 67
- cash 69
- social security 71
 - violence 73
- employment relationship 75
 - freedom of movement 77
 - protection 79
- discrimination 81
 - respect 83
- regulation 85

PREFACE

Every day, a great number of people, most of them women, are working steadily to keep our houses clean and tidy. The work they do is mostly invisible. It is done while we're at work or doing groceries. Only when it is not done, does it become noticeable. Those who perform this work remain largely invisible themselves, working behind closed doors, to which they have the keys. They receive instructions from notes left on kitchen tables, where they also find their day's payment. Some of them prefer not to be seen, as is the case for those who don't have residence papers and must of necessity stay unnoticed.

08

Each day, domestic workers without papers, known as 'undocumented' workers, face situations which are unthinkable for others. Everyday activities like using public transport, buying insurance or taking a holiday, present great challenges. Important basics of personal life, like celebrating children's birthdays or caring for ageing parents become nearly impossible if your relatives live in another country (which is the case for most of these workers). Without papers, each time you leave, you don't know if you will make it back into the country.

VOORWOORD

Iedere dag weer zijn er vele mensen, vooral vrouwen, aan het werk om onze huizen opgeruimd en netjes te houden. Het werk dat ze doen is onzichtbaar. Het wordt gedaan terwijl we zelf op kantoor zitten of boodschappen doen. Pas als het een tijdje niet gebeurt valt het op.... Ook de mensen die het werk doen zijn meestal onzichtbaar. Ze werken in achter gesloten voordeuren, waarvan zij de sleutel hebben. Vaak ligt er een briefje op tafel met opdrachten en de verdiensten van de dag erbij. En soms willen ze ook zelf liever niet gezien worden. Dat zijn degenen die geen verblijfspapieren hebben en daarom beter buiten het zicht van de instanties kunnen blijven.

09

Huishoudelijk werkers zonder verblijfspapieren, ook wel 'ongedocumenteerden' genoemd, worden dagelijks met zaken geconfronteerd die voor andere burgers ondenkbaar zijn. Praktische zaken als het openbaar vervoer nemen, een verzekering afsluiten of vakantie nemen zijn grote uitdagingen. Maar ook persoonlijk belangrijke dingen, zoals het vieren van de verjaardag met je kinderen of je ouders bijstaan als ze oud en ziek zijn, zijn vaak onmogelijk, als je familie in een ander land verblijft (voor de meesten de realiteit). Want je weet nooit of je Nederland weer in kan komen als je het eenmaal verlaten hebt....

As a labour union, we have no means of helping domestic workers obtain legal residential rights. What we can do, is provide support and advice about work and income. The union isn't just for workers with papers, but for all workers, whatever the form of their labour relation and legal status. For this reason domestic workers have been able to join the FNV since 2006. That year was also when they themselves started organising joint meetings at home, inviting union staff to discuss their specific needs. In the same meetings, they received their first membership cards, which for many was a first tangible proof of their existence in Dutch society, a milestone and starting point for self-organisation and the building of their collective strength.

Since then, their situation has been taken up by a networked group 'undocumented domestic workers', which – assisted by the FNV – conducts its own advocacy, both nationally and internationally. They've taken part in the discussion within the ILO (International Labour Organization) which led to the creation of ILO Convention 189 for 'Decent work for domestic workers', and are engaged to ensure the Dutch ratification of that agreement.

Right now, the waiting is for national governments, lawmakers and institutions of employers and organised labour, to ensure that the position

Als vakbond hebben we geen mogelijkheden om iets te doen aan de verblijfsstatus van deze groep huishoudelijk werkers. Wat we wel kunnen is hulp en advies geven als het gaat om werk en inkomen. Want de vakbond is er niet alleen voor werkenden met papieren, maar voor alle werkenden, ongeacht het soort arbeidscontract en ongeacht verblijfsstatus. Daarom kunnen huishoudelijk werkers zonder verblijfspapieren sinds 2006 lid worden van de FNV. Toen kwamen de eerste ongedocumenteerde huishoudelijk werkers bijeen op hun zolderkamers om met vakbondsmedewerkers te praten over wat zij nodig hadden. Daar kregen de eerste leden hun ledenpasjes, voor velen het eerste tastbare bewijs van hun bestaan en identiteit in Nederland. een mijlpaal, en een startpunt om zich te organiseren en elkaar te versterken. Dit heeft geleid tot de netwerkgroep 'ongedocumenteerde huishoudelijk werkers', die – met steun van de FNV – hun eigen lobby voeren en die nationaal en internationaal van zich laten horen. Zij hebben ook bijgedragen aan de discussie in de ILO die in 2011 leidde tot de totstandkoming van ILO verdrag 189 inzake 'Decent work for domestic workers', en zich sindsdien inzet voor de ratificatie van dat verdrag ook door Nederland.

Het is nu aan de nationale overheden, de politiek en de sociale partners om ervoor te zorgen dat de

of all domestic workers, both documented and undocumented, is improved. This is not something which can wait any longer! It is very peculiar that a structural form of work which contributes an important function to our economy and society, is allowed to take place in a wholly unregulated, invisible way. According to estimates, 400.000 people are active daily to assist a great number of dual-income households and other working people, by taking work off their hands. It's high time to ensure that this important work can be done decently and openly, by taking it out of its shroud of invisibility, bringing it under normal coverage of labour law and, in particular, of social security.

Only when domestic work is perceived as 'real work' and a 'real job', can we make serious improvements for the most vulnerable group, the undocumented domestic workers. As a union this is something we'll keep fighting for, with and for all domestic workers, those who have papers and those who do not.

Catelene Passchier, vice-president FNV

positie van alle huishoudelijk werkers, gedocumenteerd en ongedocumenteerd, verbeterd. Dat is echt de hoogste tijd! Het is niet meer van deze tijd dat werkzaamheden die zo structureel gebeuren en een bijdrage leveren aan onze economie en samenleving zo onzichtbaar en ongeregeld plaatsvinden. Naar schatting 400.000 mensen zijn dagelijks weer aan het werk om te zorgen dat alle tweeverdienners en andere werkenden in Nederland hun dagelijkse werk kunnen doen, door een deel van de zorg voor het huishouden, maar ook voor kinderen en ouderen, uit handen te nemen. Het is hoog tijd om dit werk nu eindelijk fatsoenlijk te regelen. Dat wil zeggen: uit de onzichtbaarheid halen en onder arbeidsrecht en vooral sociale zekerheid brengen.

Pas als huishoudelijk werk als 'echt werk' gezien wordt, als we er 'echte banen' van maken, kunnen we ook iets doen voor de meest kwetsbare groep, de ongedocumenteerde huishoudelijk werkers. Daar zullen we als vakbond voor blijven strijden, voor en met alle huishoudelijk werkers, met en zonder papieren.

Catelene Passchier, vicevoorzitter FNV

Huishoudelijk

WERK

is
ERI

Wij Zijn Geen

Crimineel

LEGALISEER
ONS WERK!
100.000 FAMILIES
VERTRUWEN ONS!

E
M

NO WORK
NO PAY

WE TAKE CARE
OF YOUR CHILDREN

Domestic workers work!
Identify them!
189!
Undocumented

LEGALISEER
ONS WERK!

BANK

Domestic workers work!
Identify them!
189!

CONTRACT

If you want a good service you have to pay me good too. This is the main thing I negotiate with my employer before I start to work for them. They always notice that my payment is higher than normal. This is because I treat the house as my own, I really look after it as if it were my own. So I always say that a good service costs something, and that you have to also treat me well. Because if you're mean to me, how can you have my loyalty?

EMPLOYER

19

In a way you could say we buy the trust we get from our employers. It often happens that they leave money in their pockets, in drawers or elsewhere at their house. Or, if someone was just divorced, they throw out their wedding ring. Of course, it would be easy to keep things without your employer noticing. I believe the trust we build with each employer is the most important part of our work. The most important thing for us is that we can be trusted, with your house, with your kids. And this is priceless.

WORK

There is enough work. The neighbours of our employers constantly ask if we have free time left. There is a demand for domestic work. There is always someone in need of a cleaner and we always recommend our friends. So the contacts are made via via, through word of mouth, and this is connected with trust. Because if you trust me, you can also give this trust to my friend.

Also when we have too much work to do or if you get sick, we always ask friends to help us. When you ask somebody to replace you, it has happened that the employer asks that person: do you want to stay working for us? A Filipino will not really accept this, because there's a kind of principle that tells us, "We are a community!" And if you nevertheless do that, you know you will be ostracised.

OVERTIME COMPENSATION

Employers are generally nice people. I only have just one or two of them who are not that nice, due to personal problems. Sometimes there's an employer that just calls you for a favour, for example: "Oh! I think I forgot to turn off the oven, could you please go to my house and check it?"

Sometimes I was asked to work on a Sunday evening, for a special occasion at the house. And with that favour my employer and I created a good relationship. If that happens I always say: "Okay, but you have to pay me double for this, this is the condition." Because I have my day off on Sundays, I ask for a double payment.

And if you have to take care of kids the first thing they usually ask during the interview is: "Can you be flexible?" And I always say: of course I can be flexible when it is not affecting my other work appointments. I have to be professional as well to my other employers.

WORKPLACE

My boss told me many times: "I don't want you to call me boss, I am a friend." When someone comes to her place while I'm cleaning, my American employer always says: "Bing is helping me, she is a younger sister of mine."

My German employer wants me to call her by her name, Caroline. Actually she is like a mentor for me, I ask her advice on many things and sometimes we just have a cup of coffee together. So we talk about our lives or how the kids are doing. It is mostly this kind of friendly boss-employee relation all the time. She always tells me that we are equal. There is respect and there's trust between us. She also says: "I am lucky you can be at the house."

HEALTH

27

I called her to inform her I wasn't able to work that day. Later, she gave me the payment for the day I was sick. But not everybody is like this. The same happened when I had my school exam and needed time to prepare, we swapped the day for another one in the week after my exam.

This isn't always the case. But this particular employer always pays, whenever I am sick and also when she is sick and she doesn't want me to come to the house. She always pays me, even if I'm not able to do it. She is also the one who says: "Go and fight for your rights!"

WORKER

29

I have one friend, he is a policeman and works in Rotterdam. He once caught a person from Thailand, but he was not working alone so it wasn't possible to let her go. He told me that if somebody is undocumented it doesn't mean that person is a criminal. He said: "For me, she was a worker and I don't have any problem with that. I know that if there is someone undocumented, they are workers and not criminals."

LABOUR MIGRATION

31

In almost every family there's someone who works abroad. Actually one in five people from the Philippines live and work outside of the country. This all started in the time of Marcos when Filipinos were encouraged to go abroad. It became a policy of the government to export human capital. And then in Saudi Arabia there were Filipinos as construction workers, as in the Middle East there were Filipinos working as domestic workers. So the money and sacrifices of these people working abroad helped the economy of the country to grow. This policy was maintained until the end of Marcos' administration. And it also became part of the mentality of the Filipinos. Something like: 'I want to study so I can go abroad'. This became normal to everyone, especially among young people. Right now, according to the Filipino mentality, going abroad is the only solution to have a better life. It is common that after graduation the plan of a person is not to have a business or to work in the Philippines but to work abroad and send the money home. And the family spend this money so easily, because they think that money in Europe is something you just pick from the tree. So this mentality creates a vicious circle that is followed by everyone in the family.

FAMILY

33

I have clients for whom I have been working for almost ten years. In some cases their kids have already moved out. And yes, this means that my hours for these houses are reduced. The amount of work decreases, because the house is almost empty. But these clients are the ones I called Mom and Dad because I've been with them for such a long time.

INVISIBLE

35

I clean in a sort of a gym belonging to a British woman. So one day, unexpectedly, I received a message from her on my phone saying:
if someone comes to the gym while you are cleaning just say that you came to deliver something. Please, don't ever tell to anyone that you are working in my gym and that you work as a domestic worker.

And I replied to her:
no problem, I understand.

This is the way one of my employers wants me to behave toward the outside. Because if other people know about me working there, she will get a fine.

SAFE

There's a risk of being caught when you don't pay for the bus or tram or if you have an accident with your bicycle. These are moments when the police comes automatically.

One time, I left my place of work and I forgot my coat. Then it happened, there was this alarm that went off and wouldn't stop and I could not control myself. My fingers... you know... I never wear my glasses at work and I tried to press the code of the alarm. And I was telling myself: "Maybe I can do it?"

In the office I saw all my colleagues laughing at me for this. It was ridiculous! You know what? When it happened, I thought: this is my last day here.

REPATRIATION



I always had the idea to stay in the Netherlands for only two years, but after these two years I was still here. Last year I told my employer that I've decided to stay for one more year. So my employer was already aware of that. Now that the situation in the Philippines has changed again, I have changed my mind again. So I might not go back and stay here even longer. If you don't have papers you are ready to change your mind anytime. I would be lying if I say that I am planning ahead.

Last year my boss told me, only if you have concrete plans before you go back home there is a chance to succeed. Most people that go back without having plans – and I see millions that go home like that – spend all their money in half a year. So after a while they come back to the Netherlands. So the cycle continues.

CHILDREN

I had a discussion once with a friend. After his daughter graduated from engineering school, my friend brought her here to be the same as us, to be a domestic worker. I told her: "Why did you send your kids to expensive schools, make them acquire a good degree and then bring them here to work as undocumented domestic workers? And who will be next? Your granddaughter? Your grandkids?" I mean, how can you end this cycle of working abroad if you don't change your mentality?

My friend thought I would do the same with my children. But I told her: "No! They are going to a good school in order not to be an undocumented worker abroad." There is nothing wrong with being a domestic worker, but I want them to have a better chance, a better opportunity in life. If they really want to go abroad it is because they will work in the profession that they've been studying for. Otherwise the story never stops repeating.

IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

43

I am living a life that is very depressing in regard to work. The only difference is that it is now much easier for me to go back any time, to see my children and family. It's easier to walk on the street here without being afraid of the police. It is easier for me to have access to health insurance, to have a bank account, and so on. But there are lots of troubles in all this as well. When I was working without papers I didn't have to think about taxes, for instance. I knew I was not really secure here but I didn't have that stress of the taxes.

Anyway, I think being documented is good for me, because it allows me to have the most basic rights in this country. And above all it makes it possible for me to move forward in life.

WOMEN

45

Before I came here I broke up with my boyfriend. I didn't want to be the missing part of a relationship. I also didn't want to leave children behind because I start living in another country. I tried to do this without having a family. Of course I miss my parents, my brothers and sisters, but to leave a husband and children behind is different. Now there is nobody waiting for me.

Nonetheless, I miss my family and the main thing is to support each other. But I said to my brothers and sisters: "Don't ever you dare to go abroad, because life there is quite difficult. There are other things you can do, like have a big farm and I can give you a certain amount of money to get it, but please cherish that money, because I earned it with my sacrifice."

MINIMUM WAGE

Luckily we all have good employers. Our minimum is about twelve to fifteen euros per hour. Well, my employer voluntarily gave me an incentive, saying: "You have been working here for three years already, but you never ask for an increase. So now I want to increase your salary by three euros."

But I don't get any holiday money. The only thing we get is a bonus for Christmas. And for my birthday I also received something. I would say it always depends on the individual agreement you make with every employer. But most of our employers tell us, that if we would have papers they would be glad to give us a regular job.

RECRUITMENT

49

If I cannot come to work, I have to find somebody who can replace me. For instance, my wife or a friend. When this is the case, my employer asks me first whether this new person is someone she can trust. And she would ask me some details of the background of this person, for example: "Is he part of your family?"

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

51

There's one employer that always turns on a Filipino radio station when I come to work. He even asked me which radio station I want to listen to when I'm working, and I said: "Love Radio." Sometimes when I arrive in his house and there is nobody there, the music is on. It is so surprising to hear this music when I open the door! He does it to make me feel comfortable.

DOMESTIC WORK

53

While you work in a private house, some employers leave you alone and go to their jobs, or go out to do other things. They see you are busy and don't want to get in your way while you're working. The employer uses that time to do shopping for example, so when they return they know how many hours you have been working there.

And of course, to go out and leave you inside the house, they have to know they can trust you. They don't have to worry about you doing something bad at their place. And this trust, you have to feel it. Otherwise there is nothing you can do over there. The point is: when they give you the key to the house, it is also your house.

TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

55

Some of my employers can behave strangely with their house key. They care about you having access to their home. Because if they have a problem with you, they don't know what you will do with their keys. So they have to change all the locks and that will cost them money.

So what happens if they no longer want you as their cleaner, they immediately find another way of dealing with their keys. Sometimes they say: "There'll be another nanny at the house and we don't have a spare key, could you please give back your key? Don't worry, next time when you come we'll open the door for you and let you in."

The next step to end the labour relation is to change the working hours. Let's say you always come on a Wednesday and you don't have the key of the house anymore. So they change the time and the day saying: "Can you come another day maybe?" This is the beginning of the end.

The issue of the key is an important one, it is connected with the way you work in this house. If an employer asks you to give back the keys, it's a signal.

MIGRANTS

It's nice to work for an expat. Like four years ago, an expat family I used to work for, went away and told me: "Bing, we are going to leave the key here, because there is a new family that will come here when we are gone, and they want you to be their cleaner."

So when the new ones came, I handed over the key to them and they said: "You must be Bing, right?" This is actually nice, because there's a change of employer but you still work in the same house. It means you know the place already, you are experienced in their new house.

In general you receive huge amounts of money from expats during their holidays. When they are out of town, they just pay me for the weeks I was supposed to clean at their house.

MONEY TRANSFER

It's not advisable to have a lot of money here. Because once you get arrested there's no chance of going back to your room. If you're caught, you know any money you keep there is gone. Therefore most of us, as we don't have our own bank account here, we need to make money transfers to people in the Philippines that have a bank account. Sometimes these are your nieces or your own kids. Other times it is your husband or your wife. So this is what the majority of people do. But when there is a sick person in the family they will use the money to help this person. It is needed and you have no choice. In the Philippines they see you as a big bank account.

And when you go back home, the savings are not under your name and you want to get it back. This is always a big issue! Usually there is already a lot of money accumulated over the years and this causes trouble. You even have to push to get your money back once you have returned to your country. It is your money but it is deposited on an account that is not yours.

EQUAL TREATMENT

The solidarity in our group is strong. But talking about the relationship between documented and undocumented, that is very different. Yes, there is solidarity between the undocumented, I can assure you. But in the relationship between undocumented and documented migrants... there is a barrier, somehow.

Some domestic workers with papers do not want to be associated with domestic workers without papers. Some documented even criticise those who are staying here without papers, saying: "Why are you staying here if you are illegal? Why you don't go back?"

TRAVEL

63

I wish I could travel, without fear! Vacation and travelling, they are things that don't apply to us. They are only for our employers. This is actually one of the things we demand, we wish we could be able to...

We only have Sundays as a day off, sometimes a Saturday, you should consider this as our vacation.

WEEKLY REST PERIOD

I work full-time so I do not have time for a vacation. In the beginning I didn't even have a day off, because I was working seven days a week. Only after a month, I spoke to my boss about it and I asked if it was possible to take a day off, proposing that my wife would do my job on Sundays. Now I am allowed to have one day off a week.

BANK

67

Some of us who have been working for an employer for a very long time already, ask him to keep our money. Simply because it is dangerous to have money in our own houses. So, this means I don't ask some employers to pay me every week, it is a kind of saving method.

CASH

69

One of our colleagues was accidentally hit by a car when she was on her bike. The owner of the car called the police. So the police came and asked the lady for her passport and also checked her bag. The lady had 3000 euros in her bag and the police asked: "Where does all this money come from?" She told them that it was Paluwagan and she could not explain them what that is exactly, so the police took the money.

Paluwagan is something that many of the Filipino workers use. To be able to save money, a group of people form a common fund. For example, every week ten people decide to put, let's say a hundred euros in this fund. At the end of the month the total amount gathered is picked up by one person of the group. Then they rotate and do the same for someone else of this closed group. It is a kind of system for making savings.

SOCIAL SECURITY

We are used to being connected with each other. We are not raised as individuals but as a collective of people, as part of a group. In Ghana there is a kind of story that if you take a broom and if you break it, it breaks. But when you are holding it together and try to break it, then it doesn't break. So that is also our driving force, togetherness means victory.

Of course we have problems but we're not depressed. It is the system here that makes people depressed, because it makes you dependent on it. If you have a problem with the government, it's between you and the government, and in that situation you don't have anyone to fall back on. And that is depressing.

In my country, if you have a problem, the system cannot help you, the system does not support you, so you have to fall back on your own family. You are dependent on them and they become your support system. That's why many domestic workers without family in the Netherlands get depressed. We live in fear, because everybody is busy, nobody wants to listen to you and no one wants to hear your story. You walk with a burden and you go on and don't know what is going to happen next. The only thing that keeps us going is our perseverance.

VIOLENCE

73

In 2015, when there were riots for two days with the police in The Hague, I saw it all from my balcony. There were gunshots, stone throwing, arrests. For two days I didn't leave my apartment.

My employer told me: "Don't worry, the police will never come into your apartment, the trouble is somewhere on the street. But if you are really that scared I can pick you up with my car any time. And if the police stops us you can say that you are my fiancée, is that fine? I can also bring you some groceries so you don't have to go out."

This was nice, but I thought: how can I go out? The entrance of the building was full of policemen, they even got into the building. I was actually really scared but I said to myself: "I am not scared!" The riots lasted about a week, so I just stayed in. And in a way, it was also fun to watch everything from above.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

75

I normally don't see my employers but there is one for whom I've worked for three years already, and she is like a mother to me. Whenever I am at her house she makes sure I eat. When I've worked for more than two hours, she'll stop me and say: "Now you eat!"

She treats me like a daughter. She advises me on things. She asks me: "What did you do this weekend?" And I say: "Oh, not much, I was studying." Then she replies: "But you are young, you need to go out and have fun!" And recently her mother died and I thought her mother was my grandmother so I cried, I really felt pain.

Another employer owns a restaurant and his wife is a lawyer. I call him Sir or boss because we don't have that kind of close relationship. But one day I was really surprised when he sat me down at the table and started to talk about his problem. He told me what he went through during his childhood and it turned out I had to advise him. That was new to me, because I call him boss so it was a change in our relationship. He ended up giving me ten euros more, because apparently he liked what I told him.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

77

When you're undocumented, you only plan your life back home. Therefore if you have money and you don't know what can happen to you here, better to not keep the money here. Actually, you plan your life not here but elsewhere. So, whatever you earn you have to send it home. Because if something unfortunate happens to you, you will still have something back home.

When you have documents you have the possibility to make plans here and also back home. But when you are undocumented you only have one option, to plan your life back home. If you don't have anything that protects you in the country where you are living and working, something that legalises your situation, the promise of a future does not work! Because the government has already drawn a line for you, you are an undocumented person. And if there is police knocking at your door, entering the place where you live, the first thing they'll ask you: "Who are you? What is your purpose here?"

PROTECTION

79

You know what it is to travel from one tram to another tram in different directions? Well, this is what I did one day, I didn't want to go back straight to my place. They know your routines, because they have been following you for a while. It is tough! I even changed all the days with my employers, I had to scramble my whole working schedule. Another friend of mine, also a domestic worker, went back home because she could not bear this constant risk. And she had a reason to be afraid of getting arrested. Because the police who caught other colleagues of ours had pictures of these people. The police knew where everyone was living and they knew all the houses where they were working. The police even had photos of them opening the door to their employers' house. So, someone was following these domestic workers for a while.

This case was really a surprise, because nobody knew these colleagues were under surveillance for so many months. And yes, after that, we were all very paranoid.

DISCRIMINATION

These are people I really hate to meet in a train or in a tram, because they can arrest me. I heard a story of some friends that were on a train. There were policemen on the train, suspicious and looking at them. Maybe because of their Asian look, I don't know. But they were asked to present their ID and so they were caught.

Therefore to avoid this kind of situation, we go away discretely when we see a policeman. If this happens, we say to each other: "There is friendship!" But in a way this creates the idea in your own head that you're a criminal. The word criminal stays with you because of all the stories from others, it gets into your mind.

RESPECT

I don't allow any person or a card to define me. Because I believe there's more I can do than being undocumented. Some of our undocumented colleagues are very intelligent and very dedicated. But they allow their situation to limit themselves. I keep saying: "Hey, you shouldn't let a card define who you are, or limit where you want to go to. There are so many things to do here for everybody!" Yes, we are limited in a way, you cannot do whatever you want if you're undocumented. But there are many other things you can do. So, while you're waiting what your future is going to be, why not just take a risk and explore? This is actually what I am doing. Sometimes I travel abroad, without fear.

I only get afraid when I am going to work. For example in secluded areas, areas with houses for rich people. Haarlem is dangerous. Heemstede, Loosdrecht, Baarn: those are the dangerous areas for me. So if you are walking in these kinds of places as a black person, and of course you are by foot, you will raise a lot of suspicion. "Oh my God, let me walk fast..."

Once I refused a job because I thought the area was too risky. The hours and payment were good but the house was located in such an area that I thought: "Hmm, this is not going to be okay for me." This was a moment I said to myself : "Now I feel I am an undocumented person."

REGULATION

Some feel more secure now, because they know that I am legal. So leaving the house in case the police come is no longer an issue. They aren't afraid that I will be caught by the police, they know I can defend myself one way or the other. I don't have to run away anymore, I will come back to them. So, the clients I work for don't have to worry about that anymore.

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HEEFT
EEN PENSIOEN

geweldig
dat je
hier bent
om ons te
Helpen

ULLIE
KINDEREN
ROEIEN OP
MET ONS

Ratificeer
ILO Conventie
189

