

# Familiar Strangers: Migrant Family Reunification in Canada

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## Canada's Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP)

- LCP (1992)
  - Reside with employers
  - Care for children, elderly or persons with disabilities
- Workers must have:
  - HS education or higher
  - 12 months' experience or 6 months' training course
  - 2009: 63% Bachelor's degree
  - Speak English or French
  - Bona fide contract with Canadian employer
- Employers must:
  - Provide private, lockable room
  - Follow standard contract

## Staying In Canada

- Permanent residency (PR) status
  - 24 months or 3,900 hours of labour within 48 months
  - Deported if they fail to meet requirements
- BUT
  - Denied if anyone has criminal record or fails medical examination
  - Children over 21 are not enrolled in post-secondary education
  - Quota on numbers of PR permits granted
- Without PR status,
  - Cannot reunite with family members
  - Enroll in educational programs without paying astronomical fees
- Over 52,400 have attained PR status
  - 91% from the Philippines
  - 98% women



## ANNIE

We are like strangers. ... They feel that I am no longer the same Mom I used to be. I said, "I am the same, but then how can I [be]? ... My last vacation was in 1999." My children are growing up without me and I am not there when they are sick. It's been eight years that I've been away.

## MELODIE

They didn't really know me and I don't know them, too. So it's kind of tough getting connected . . . I come home, I am so tired and I can't even sit them and say, "How was your day?"... And even over the weekend, I hardly see them. I work, too. At some point my kids told me: "You're too far away. You're here, but you are too far."

## RAMONA

Of course now it's, she's bigger, she's a teenager, ...you can see, she's in an adult body, but I'm sure emotionally she's, probably like eight years old or six years old, right, like, the emotional attachment with both of us so, I think that's, um, it's the work that has to be done. Ah but she's smart, she's, you know, responsible, but, she doesn't know us, we don't know her too!

## MARIANA

The ideal hope was, when I see my mom, it's just going to be all right—like communication is not going to be that difficult, and I'll be able to talk to her about everything, but it wasn't like that. . . . I think part of me is still angry [with my mom]. About her not being there.

## NATALIE

They have to listen to me ... because [I] know what is going here. Especially my husband, sometimes he complains. “You have to listen to me so, later you’ll understand why it is like that. You will realize why it is like that.”

## RAPHAEL

Well, you know, they [their wives] act like they know everything there. Then again, ... you're the man of the house, ... you look like down, you look like you're nothing, this and that. But then again ... you learn how they do it here, too. And then, ah, just adjust yourself.



## DISCUSSION

- Migration ≠ individual, independent choice
- Situated in political-economic and historical context
- Gender ideologies
- Whose family?
- Stratified family reunification

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS-1

- Ratify and Enforce ILO Convention C-189
- See if WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel applies
- Recognize care-labour as skilled work
- Establish an independent Office of Migrant Labour
- Allow family members to accompany migrants
- Allow temporary foreign workers to be tied to a sector and not an employer

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS-2

- Require employers to pay a living wage
- Raise minimum wage
- Identify strategies to end discriminatory hiring practices where demands for “Canadian experience” are code words for whiteness
- Ensure that employers: obey migrant worker contracts and provide them with the same wages as Canadian workers
- Monitor deductions

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS-3

- Family to accompany migrant workers
- Redefine 'family'
- Affordable housing options
- Recognition of credentials
- Live-out status
- Offer better state-supported childcare, eldercare, and home care for the infirm and persons with disabilities



THANK YOU  
MERCİ BEAUCOUP  
MUCHAS GRACIAS  
SALAMAT PO