



“A Willingness to Dig”: Autonomous Feminist Struggles and Care Work

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by

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INTERCEDE's banner at the 1990 Toronto International Women's Day March

Introduction

This paper explores the possibilities, limitations and tensions of autonomous women's struggle by mapping the history of care work movements that unfolded throughout the 1980s and 1990s in Ontario. In particular, I examine the history of the organization INTERCEDE (International Coalition to End Domestic Exploitation) which mobilized waged domestic workers and their transnational feminist allies from the Caribbean, the Philippines, China, and the United Kingdom around the demand for pathways to permanent residency for workers, and an expansion of workplace rights. This movement serves as a powerful example of autonomous struggle by a sector of workers who were denied the support of formal labour organizations. Despite the historic achievements made by this movement, it is excluded from histories of workers' struggle in Canada. In grappling with the politics of autonomous struggle on the long-term goals of this movement, this paper applies the movement-based analysis produced by the Guyanese activist Andaiye. In particular, I use her 2002 essay “The

Angle You Look from Determines What You See: Towards a Critique of Feminist Politics and Organizing in the Caribbean” which examines how hierarchies were produced within popular struggles based in the Anglo-Caribbean, and how this necessitated women organizing autonomously. Citing the work of the grassroots Red Thread Women's Development Organisation, here she argues, “the principle of autonomous organizing of sectors should be applied, based on an honest evaluation of how power works in the organization, which can only come ‘from digging and a willingness to dig’ into one’s experience as oppressor and oppressed” (Andaiye and Trotz 2020, 13).

Drawing from both Andaiye’s scholarship and the publication archive of INTERCEDE’s monthly newsletter *Domestics Cross-Cultural News* within the Rise Up! Feminist Archive this paper is premised on the following research question: *How did INTERCEDE organize an autonomous working women’s movement that advanced the freedom dreams of transnational feminist struggle?*

Scholarship and activism based in the Caribbean and Latin America has brought to light the historical contours of the devaluation of care work and the gendered, and racial divisions of this labour (Ford-Smith & French 1986; Reddock 1985; Andaiye 2000; National Union of Domestic Employees in Trinidad; Red Thread Women’s Organization in Guyana; Housewives Union in Argentina). This research traces the conditions of care work from slavery to the present, arguing that the capitalist system built on plantation slavery continues into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as gendered work allowing neo-liberal economies and the ruling class to prosper. My methodology is then informed by theories of social reproduction that provide a more expansive account of Marx’s analytical framework—accounting for racial, gendered, and citizenship inequalities that converge within these workers’ struggles. The goal of this paper is to chart how this global movement against uncaring markets manifested in Ontario and reformed labour and immigration policies. I am inspired by the Padua Wages for Housework Committee’s 1972 interrogation of the power structure of the organized

labour movement and its concept of “general struggle”: Can anything be “general” which has excluded women for so long?

Historical Background: Domestic Service in Canada

In the early years of the 20th century there was a high demand for domestic workers, particularly in western Canada. This pool of workers was drawn exclusively from Britain, Ireland and other European nations. This pattern ended in the mid-1950s with the start of the Caribbean Domestic Scheme which recruited unmarried women between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five, mostly from Jamaica and Barbados, to work in Canada for at least one year with an assigned employer. Though Canadian officials favoured white domestics, over the course of half a century they had exhausted attempts to secure a workforce solely from European countries. With pressure mounting to fill mass shortages of qualified care workers, the Canadian government circumvented its racially restrictive immigration policy to allow for Caribbean women to migrate to Canada as landed immigrants to work as domestic servants¹. The stark contrast between this scheme and earlier recruitment campaigns reflected the racist ideology that undergirded this program. For one, this scheme differed from previous foreign domestic programs in that the sending countries were required to bear the responsibilities and costs for recruiting, training, medically testing, and transporting domestic workers to Canada (Arat-Koc 1997, 75). Further, upon arrival in Canada these women were subjected to intrusive gynecological exams to ensure that they were neither pregnant, nor carried venereal diseases. These tests along with the requirement that workers be single were part of the Canadian government’s attempts to ensure that these women were migrating *solely* for the purpose of filling a labour shortage. Under no circumstances would there be sponsorship of partners or children and eligibility for permanent residency was severely limited. Approximately 3,000 women came to Canada through this immigration program, and it was

1 Landed immigrants are granted the same rights as full citizens, except that they cannot vote, hold political office, or hold jobs related to national security. They can apply for citizenship after having lived in Canada for three years. (England and Stiell 1997).

deemed a success by the government. As Arat-Koc (Ibid., 76) explains, “Canada was receiving an over-qualified workforce to perform domestic labour at no cost to itself. Many of the women recruited under the program were so highly educated that their emigration contributed to a ‘brain drain’ from Barbados.” The Caribbean Domestic Scheme marked the beginning of domestic work shifting from the domain of white women to racialized women. Later iterations of the program mediated through private recruitment agencies drew domestic workers from the Philippines, China and Latin America. By 1973, “open” immigration of domestic workers ended with the introduction of the Temporary Employment Authorizations Program (TEAP). Now, rather than arriving as landed immigrants with marginal rights, domestic workers came on temporary work authorizations effectively indenturing them to their employer. Commenting on a similar phenomenon which they conceptualize as the global “housewifization” of Filipino workers, Barber and Bryan (2014, 31) explain: “Following neoliberal rationalization, a gap in care provisioning necessitates that women, whose paid labour is undervalued and whose domestic labour is regarded as infinitely flexible, take up this social intervention.” It was during these early years in the era of neo-liberal capitalism that care labour migration became an integral feature of the global dispersal and reorganization of the social reproduction of labour (Ibid.) These workers formed the core of INTERCEDE’s membership.

INTERCEDE

“I work so many long hours without extra pay, sometimes not even proper food to eat. They treat you like you are not human. They even told me not to bring no friends in their home. It hurt but I go along with it just for the sake of my children. They have an old saying ‘if you want good your nose have to run’. That is why I live with it so long.” Melrose Morgan (*DC-CN* April 1985).

Melrose Morgan came to Canada from Jamaica in June 1979 to labour as a domestic worker for a family of four, a position she held for three and a half years. In October of 1984 she was refused landing under the Foreign Domestic Program (FDP) due to the fact that she had not “upgraded

herself” while working in Canada. Her employer had simply refused to grant her the necessary time off for additional training, even though this was required under the FDP. Melrose hired a lawyer and appealed her case several times but each time the decision was upheld. As a result, after her VISA expired she was forced to live in Canada illegally and was unable to find employment. She explains what happened next: “they [lawyer] turn my case over to INTERCEDE, they go to any length to help me. For the past long months it’s been a tough time for me. I can’t work and I don’t know what the outcome is going to be, but I trust in God it will work out.” INTERCEDE eventually appealed the decision to deny Melrose landing to then Minister of Immigration John Roberts. His office promised to reassess her case on the condition that she successfully complete the healthcare aid course she had enrolled in. In June 1984 Melrose “passed her course with flying colours” (*DC-CN* March 1985). However, Roberts never followed through on his promise to authorize a reassessment of Melrose’s appeal. INTERCEDE then appealed to the new Minister of Immigration Flora MacDonald and were met with the same result. Despite these circumstances Melrose continued to fight for landed status in Canada: “This has been my home for more than five years now, and my sister and close relatives all live here. I’ve worked so hard and been apart from my children for so long to make a future for us together.” Melrose asked INTERCEDE to continue to advocate on her behalf, and after seeking legal counsel the organization took her case to federal court. It is unclear what happened next for Melrose; no more updates about her case appear in the *Domestic’s Cross-Cultural News*. However her story of long and complex appeals, bureaucratic delays, broken promises and exploitation is one of many reported by domestic workers in the pages of INTERCEDE’s monthly newsletter.

Between 1973 and 1979 roughly sixty thousand women like Melrose entered Canada to labour as domestic workers, the vast majority arriving from the Caribbean and the Philippines. These women were mostly recruited to come to Canada on temporary VISAs issued through the TEAP—forbidding them by law to change their status to permanent residents. Annual renewal could only be granted if the

domestic worker continued to work for her original employer. This program essentially created conditions in which the workers were at the mercy of their employers—barring them from changing sectors of work, or moving from one domestic job to another (Ramirez 1983/84, 16). Domestic workers also laboured without contracts, bargaining rights, and had no legal protections under provincial labour law. As a result, workplace exploitation was rampant. Between 1973 and 1989 their pay rates were between \$3.50 to \$5 per hour but as they were not remunerated for overtime, some domestic workers' salaries were in reality closer to \$1.50 per hour. This is discussed in more detail later on in this paper. One study by INTERCEDE found that domestic workers were regularly fired without notice and thrown out on the street, sometimes at night, and in the dead of winter. The Vancouver-based West Coast Domestic Workers' Association also found that employers locked out domestic workers and denied them access to their rooms and belongings (Stasiulis and Bakan 1997, 7). Domestic workers stayed in Canada for an average of 3.5 years before they were “unceremoniously” ordered to leave the country, at which point they were replaced by another woman from the Caribbean or Philippines (Ibid.). One of INTERCEDEs founders Judith Ramirez described the TEAP as, “a revolving door of exploitation which has met the considerable demand for live-in domestic work in Canada at the lowest possible cost to the employers and government alike” (Ibid.)

INTERCEDE was formed in 1979 to combat the pervasive abuse that domestic workers faced under FDPs. Their founding was in part the outcome of the case of the “Seven Jamaican Women”, wherein the Department of Immigration attempted to deport seven domestic workers after these women applied in 1976 to sponsor their children as immigrants to Canada (Fudge 1997, 125). The case garnered widespread media attention, and a national campaign was coordinated between several domestic workers' organizations. Though the women were eventually deported, the persistent lobbying effort formed in response to their case forced the Canadian state to make changes to its immigration policy, granting temporary workers the right to apply for landed status. The majority of INTERCEDE's

activism involved lobbying government for new immigration policies that would allow domestic workers to settle in Canada permanently, and for basic protections for domestic workers to be enshrined under provincial labour laws.² The organization also facilitated mutual aid projects and social activities for their members including picnics, film screenings, shopping excursions, and reading groups. The main vehicle for disseminating information to this dispersed group of workers was INTERCEDE's monthly newsletter titled *Domestics Cross-Cultural News*. Along with call outs for upcoming actions, "Know Your Rights" columns with practical information about immigration and labour laws, a typical issue also included longer, issue-specific editorials with infographics, event listings, features on art, music, and poetry, and book and music reviews. The newsletter also alerted members to meetings of their many partner organizations, including, the Philippine-Canadian Ladies Circle, Congress of Black Women in Canada, the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, and Community & Legal Aid Services Program (CLASP).

At the core of INTERCEDE's mandate was the belief that societal devaluations of care work reflect and reinforce the low status of those that perform it—worsened by racism and globalization. As Ramirez (1983/84, 17) explains,

Housework is not seen as 'real' work, but as a 'spontaneous' activity of women, an expression of women's 'nature'. This means that housework is done 'for love,' that is to say, for free. No one feels the full force of the equation between women and free housework more than the third world woman. She is still being brought to the 'advanced' countries like Canada to labour like a beast of burden with pay rates and working conditions which were outlawed long ago for 'real' workers.

² According to the March 1986 edition of *DC-CN* their core objectives were to: "1) conduct research on domestic workers' rights and work with all levels of government for changes in policy and legislation; 2) foster public awareness of domestic workers' rights; 3) provide counselling to domestic workers on immigration, employment, human rights and social services ; 4) publish educational materials and conduct educational workshops; 5) organize social and cultural events; and, 6) network with other organizations with similar objectives."

In describing how categories of oppression are coproduced with the production of surplus value, Ramirez and INTERCEDE's analysis of domestic workers' conditions in Canada dovetails with feminist theories of social reproduction (SRT) and the movement-based knowledge that flowed from the International Wages for Housework (IWFH) struggle. In particular INTERCEDE recognized the impact that the prioritization of capital accumulation over human needs had on popular understandings of social reproduction. As Barber and Bryan (32) explain: "domestic care labour represents a convergence of women's undervalued productive and unvalued reproductive roles." Part of their advocacy involved making this work visible, and therefore bridging the ideological disjunction between reproduction and production. Ramirez's quote also highlights how care migration is rooted in a transnational political economy characterized by intensive capital accumulation, drastic wealth disparities, continuous flows of "cheap" labour and rigidly structured inequalities.

Selma James (2012), Andaiye (2020), and Silvia Federici (2020) among others break from an economic analysis of capitalist society that "begins and ends in the factory" and narrowly conflates all labour with wage labour (James 2012, 45). This work draws our attention to the interactions between unpaid and paid labour, but also the life-sustaining role of caring labour. The genealogy of SRT is informed by many schools of thought and struggles. It primarily draws from and complicates Marx's insights in *Capital* (chapter 23 on 'Simple Reproduction,') where he argues that "every social process of production is, at the same time, a process of reproduction" (1977, 711). Social reproduction theory enriches Marx's description of social relations by directing our attention to the ways in which the daily and generational reproduction of human life and human labour power is absolutely essential to the tenacity of capitalism (Ferguson 2017). SRT is also influenced by the contributions of Althusser and Gramsci and the belief that this system is ideologically inscribed. An analysis of how these ideologies are put to work and co-constituted was advanced by transnational feminist scholarship. This

scholarship argued that gender, race, and sexuality are structurally relational to and shaped by capitalist production, and cannot be situated as “add-ons” to a deeper and more vital economic process.

Reconceptualizing Marx, their work begins with unwaged women—housewives, mothers, carers—who produce and reproduce all the workers of the world. Broadly speaking James argues that these movements begin by uniting what capital has divided, positioning these struggles as an essential component of working-class unity, and not an independent entity (James 2012, 73). Moving beyond the factory floor allows labour to encompass work produced within the home and the community, making visible hidden capitalist exploitation and sources of surplus labour (Ibid. 50). This work also foregrounds the social relations required to sustain capitalist production, referring not only to the relations between classes but also the relations between individuals (Ibid.,149). These relations rely on hierarchical organization: The existence of movements confirms that the hierarchy does not cease at the factory gates. Born from the need to subordinate the will of the working class to the will of capitalists, the hierarchy extends up to stratify managements and bureaucracies and down to stratify factories and farms and families. The whole society is involved in the division of labour and in this hierarchy.

Case Study: Reforming the Employment Standards Act

What the IWFH perspective demonstrates is that though Marx described hierarchy as integral to this system, he does not tease out the effects of these hierarchies. Through her experiences with the Working People’s Alliance (WPA) in Guyana, Andaiye (Andaiye and Trotz 2020, xxiv) observed first-hand how class and gender within the movement “privilege[d] middle-class and male leadership over working-class and the women’s leadership”. This drove her perspective away from understandings of power and hierarchy derived from “isms” toward understandings intimately embedded in real life. For Andaiye (Andaiye and Trotz 2020, 12) confronting hierarchical forms of organizing is only possible from a base that recognizes that such hierarchies exist, and reflects this by having sectors with different levels of power organize autonomously. These practices allow that “those with the least power, can

independently analyze [their] experience, identify its interests, and work out strategies, and bring all of this to the common table” (Ibid.). Andaiye’s work, and the IWFH perspective echo within the economic determinist vs. pluralist debates—while Marx describes the conditions in general, his theory of history does not supply the tools for understanding differences that precede and emerge from this system. What Selma James and Andaiye share is the belief that Marxism should be considered paradigmatic rather than prescriptive—historical materialism becomes a framework to understand social relations and eventually change them. In this way they challenge Western Marxist historiography by supplementing and adapting historical materialism to meet the analytical needs of the struggles their work is grounded in. SRT and the IWFH perspective therefore foreground abstracted and invisibilized labour. They assert that this labourer / producer is a gendered and racialized person, with ideas, history, social relations, skills, and culture (Barker 2017). Grounded in context and the material conditions of people and communities, this scholarship and struggle interrogates and challenges the hierarchies of power within these social relations and their function within the broader system as a whole. Andaiye (2020, xxix) describes this work as “[challenging] the power relations embedded in every facet of our lives and the need to organize together to overturn them”.

INTERCEDE engaged in an analogous form of struggle in their attempts to reform the Ontario Employment Standards Act (ESA). Between 1981 and 1987 the organization lobbied to have domestic workers recognized as “real” workers under the ESA, a step that would regulate the amount of overtime hours they worked. Before INTERCEDE’s challenge, domestic workers were paid for eight hours worth of work a day, regardless of how many hours of work they actually performed. This brought their actual hourly wage to a staggeringly low rate. In an interview with the organization’s litigator, two domestic workers from the Philippines named Manolo and Manalili described working between 69 and 91 hours a week, but only receiving \$1.17 to \$1.73 per hour (*DC-CN* July 1986). Citing accounts similar to Manolo and Manalili’s, in December 1981 INTERCEDE prepared a brief to

the Ontario Minister of Labour Bill Wyre centering the economic value of domestic labour and urging the provincial government to extend basic protections to those workers (Ramirez 1983/4). In INTERCEDE's open letter to Wyre –co-signed by several other community organizations—they made two demands: “the inclusion of all domestic workers under the hours of work and over-time provisions of the Employment Standards Act; and, granting domestic workers the right to unionize under the Labour Relations Act” (Ibid.). As a result of these efforts in 1981 the Conservative government amended legislation to provide minimum daily, weekly and monthly wages for live-in domestic workers (Fudge 1997, 126). However the Act still had not amended sections on maximum hours and overtime pay. Things did not improve in any large measure when a Liberal government was elected in 1985. Like the Conservatives, the new government claimed their decision was based on fears that these protections would negatively impact Canadian families by “requiring a lot of bookkeeping” and putting them in a “financial squeeze” (Arat-Koc 1989, 48 quoting from Fruman 1987). Despite this setback on April 11, 1985, INTERCEDE successfully lobbied the provincial government for domestic workers to come under the protection of the Workers Compensation Act. Domestic workers who worked over 24 hours per week now had access to benefits and services offered to workers injured on the job, including payment for medical expenses and loss of wages, vocational and rehabilitation services, disability pension, and death benefits for surviving dependents (*DC-CN* April 1985). By 1987 INTERCEDE argued that denial of maximum hours protections constituted a violation of worker's equality rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In response the Liberal government amended the ESA with Regulation 322, which granted domestic workers, nannies and sitters minimum employment standards. This included a provision that addressed maximum hours of work protections. However, this legally entitled domestic workers to compensatory time rather than overtime pay. Judy Fudge (1997) explains that though these minor victories were historic and improved the material conditions of domestic workers' lives, they fell short of addressing the problem of unequal

labour standards faced by these workers. She concludes that the most significant factor facing domestic workers was effective enforcement of employment standards. A problem that could only be solved by unionization or collective representation (Ibid.).

Autonomous Struggle

Fudge's conclusions about unionization highlights the autonomous nature of INTERCEDE's advocacy work, drawing attention to the lack of interest or support in this struggle from formal labour organizations. While the nature of domestic work poses challenges to trade unionization—single-employee units, logistics of strike action when a worker lives-in—the lack of a coalition with trade unions denied this movement much needed institutional support and funding. At the same time one could argue that the successes of INTERCEDE's campaigns were its foregrounding of the unique concerns of domestic workers. The International Wages For Housework shared in its practices a commitment to organizing around the specific perspectives of working-class women, or as Selma James describes “building our corner of the movement” (James 2012, 61). James' essays “Women, the Unions, and Work, Or What is Not Being Done” (1972) and “The Perspective of Winning” (1973) outline the failure of unions in addressing issues faced by working-class women, and describe how the IWFH perspective was born out of these debates and ruptures. Advancing an autonomist Marxist analysis, James (Ibid., 62) argued that unions and Left organizations, “have effectively convinced many of us that if we wish to move to working-class women it must be either through them or, more pervasively, through their definitions of the class, their orientations and their kinds of actions. It is as though they have stood blocking an open door.” She goes on to say that these organizations “challenge the validity of an autonomous women's movement” in their attempts to “make us auxiliary to the ‘general’ struggle” (Ibid.). James' essays launched a fierce debate; nearly all Left organizations and parties at the time drafted “replies to Selma James.” The incisive case she builds for autonomous organizing was shared throughout many IWFH struggles.

Andaiye came to similar conclusions based on her experiences with James and the IWFH, but also in witnessing the internal struggles of the New Jewel Movement (NJM) in Grenada. She outlines her position on autonomous struggle in her essay “The Angle You Look from Determines What You See: Towards a Critique of Feminist Politics and Organizing in the Caribbean” (2002). The NJM was a Marxist-Leninist movement established in 1973 with the aim of independence from Britain for Grenada, Carriacou, Martinique and the Grenadines. The NJM eventually toppled the repressive regime of Eric Gairey in 1979 in Grenada. The National Women’s Organization (NWO) was a broad-based women’s group comprised at its height in 1982 of 6,500 members, with the aim of addressing the needs of women in the NJM (Philip 2007). The relationship between the NJM and the NWO was Leninist: “The NJM was a cadre party made up of the most ‘advanced’ members (i.e., advanced in their reading of the science of Marxism-Leninism), and around it but subordinate, were the ‘mass organizations’” (Andaiye and Trotz 8). Andaiye argues that the NWO’s influence on the NJM was severely limited by this hierarchical structure, creating a situation where the mass organizations of women had no autonomy from the party.

Andaiye describes her involvement in these two movements as a “turning point” for her, demonstrating the need for women to organize autonomously from men (Ibid. 9). This strategy was the only way to address the asymmetries of power within movements. Flowing from this, her principle of autonomous organizing was also attentive to hierarchies of power relations *among* women within these organizations. The latter point was based on her observations of the internal dynamics of the Working People’s Alliance (WPA) in Guyana. Though not organized on Marxist-Leninist party lines, for the WPA, “a good party member... was one who did party work for 26 hours a day—[meaning] that there was not a single woman in its leadership who had children to care for” (Andaiye and Trotzz 10). This created conditions wherein the only time a woman could reach leadership positions was if they were well-off enough to hire other women to care for their children.

After reflecting on these movement-based experiences that influenced her view of autonomous struggle, Andaiye's paper turns its focus to the power discrepancies between women within grassroots movements. Here she states that, "for those of us who want to challenge all power hierarchies, we must begin with the interests of the poorest women—again, not in theory but in the way we organize and in what we organize for and against" (Ibid.). In positioning racialized, working-class women as the material base of their movement, INTERCEDE is a successful example of Andaiye's notion of autonomous struggle. INTERCEDE was led by a steering committee of fourteen members. According to their mandate eight of these members had to be current or former domestic workers, while the remaining six were community representatives (*DC-CN* August 1985). This organizational structure reflected not only the class position but also the "race" breakdown of INTERCEDE's membership. A 1991 study by the organization found that 95% of their membership came from the "Third World" (Serwonka 1991). Congruently, of the ten elected members of the Steering Committee for 1985-1986 who were former and current domestic workers, five were originally from the Caribbean, four were from the Philippines, and one was from England. Andaiye's critique of women's movements in the Anglo-Caribbean was based on their treatment of race and class: "Although many of the people who moved from the Left movement into the women's movement were themselves individuals who had struggled to make sure that race and gender were issues in the Left movement, I would still say that while the women's movement at the theoretical level links the oppressions of race, class, gender, and nation, it has not yet found a way at the active political level to link these issues" (Andaiye and Trotz, 12). By positioning racialized, working-class women in positions of influence within the movement, INTERCEDE was able to engage with their politics at the level of organizational structure—an order that, according to Andaiye, very few organizations outside of the IWFH struggle were able or willing to implement.

Later on in her essay Andaiye argues that many women's groups have transformed from grassroots activist bases into "NGOs doing projects" where the funding agencies set the agenda. Based on Honor Ford-Smith's (1989) analysis of the Sistren Collective's relationship with funding agencies in Jamaica between 1977 and 1988, Andaiye argues that dependence on funding agencies created conditions whereby formally educated members functioned as brokers between the collective and NGOs.³ This was by virtue of the fact that these members were responsible for the reporting demands forced on the collective by funding agencies. This had the effect of both undermining long-term strategic goals of Sistren, and exacerbating asymmetries of power within the collective. Ford-Smith argues that "part of the problem in Sistren was a failure to recognize the need for different kinds of leadership appropriate to different kinds of work and applicable to different moments in the life of the organization" (Ibid., 255). These same kinds of issues of funding and management were present in INTERCEDE's internal structure.

INTERCEDE was able to address some of the issues arising from the influence of funding agencies by establishing a Services Unit (SU) that dealt with the kind of bureaucratic work necessary to attract and retain funding, and formally challenging members' immigration struggles. The SU primarily handled in-depth cases of foreign domestic workers seeking landing in Canada, including appealing rejected applications. The SU was originally funded through grants authorized by the Minister of Immigration, as services to non-landed workers were not eligible under the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) (*DC-CN* March 1986.). In 1986 after years of persistent lobbying, the SU was eventually granted permanent funding through the ISAP. The SU team were required to have the following minimal qualifications: "experience as a foreign domestic in Canada; previous employment

³ Members of Sistren travelled to Canada in the early 1990s to perform their play *Domestick*, and lead a workshop on leadership and group building for INTERCEDE's members. Honor Ford-Smith, Sistren's Founding Director, also led a workshop titled "About Confidence-Building and Self-Assertiveness" during INTERCEDE's annual Christmas celebrations. (*DC-CN* November 1993).

in an office; post-secondary school diploma; strong inter-personal skills; and, familiarity with domestics' rights issues" (*DC-CN* February 1986). Their staff also included two full-time counsellors making it the only community-based group in Canada to offer such services. One of the goals of the SU was addressing the immigration concerns of its "stated target group": foreign domestic workers from "Third World Countries". According to INTERCEDE's internal report on the SU's inaugural year, of the immigration cases filed by some 783 members, 76% were from the Caribbean and the Philippines (*DC-CN* December 1985). In this way the SU was successful in its stated goal of assisting their membership base, despite its funding model. However, Andaiye raises an important point about such funding streams: "As an unwaged NGO worker, a large part of my work involves projects which provide some poor women with services which governments should be providing and maintaining for all women. Thus, I end up helping to provide services to a few women *instead* of challenging the economic model that prevents governments from providing services to all women." INTERCEDE's work on the Employment Standards Act and immigration reform reflects some of the sentiments Andaiye expresses here. Though their activism achieved piecemeal reform to labour and immigration law that was historic, they fell short of addressing the larger systemic problems of the Canadian state's racist and sexist labour and immigration policies. Just as Andaiye explains in the context of her own activism, the state grants received by INTERCEDE were useful in mobilizing around reform and funding cases brought to the SU, but they had the effect of blunting long-term strategic goals of collective bargaining rights and equal rights for workers who had been historically disadvantaged based on race, gender and class. Moreover, the strategy of reform cannot address the global inequalities fueled through capitalist modes of organization and accumulation that create the conditions for mobile workforces of low-status migrant workers.

Despite these shortcomings INTERCEDE did important work in raising the collective voice and visibility of the domestic workers struggle, and lobbying the government to grant workers employment-

related rights. By uncompromisingly centering working-women's perspectives, INTERCEDE is a powerful example of the gains that can be made through autonomous organizing. Andaiye's conceptualization of autonomous struggle was built on both countering the "cutting off of gender" in Left organizations, but also with an internationalist framework. The overall goal of autonomous organizing was therefore to rally around the specific needs of dispersed and diverse communities toward a goal of a collective struggle that was global in scope—the only pathway for uniting what capital had co-opted and divided. Susan Ferguson (17) argues that: "[work] is life activity. And because it is shaped in and through people's relationships with each other, work changes in accordance with changes in those relationships... [work's] social form—how work is organized—matters to how to how freely, or not, people create their worlds, their societies, their lives." By routing our analysis of work through human relationships, this passage allows us to conceptualize work as both a form of oppression but also a mode of freedom. In the feminist imagination work is expansive, encompassing a mode of critique but also a pathway for prefiguring more equitable futures. It is something done for a wage, and something done for love and justice. This was the grounds on which movements like INTERCEDE struggled. On this basis, as Andaiye (2020, 18) explained "my goal is a work which values caring labour because... it values caring as the essence of the relationships among people."

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