

# **DEVIL IS IN THE DETAIL: SOME LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM THE UK GOVERNMENT'S RECENT REGULARISATION OF MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The ESRC funded project transnational household strategies and migrant domestic workers takes the complexity of transnationalism as applied to contemporary migrants head on. It focuses on the situation of migrant domestic workers living in London as they take advantage of a special regularisation procedure and move from being undocumented to being documented i.e. having the right to live and work in the UK. Many have been in the UK for many years, some have children born in the UK, and many are the main breadwinner for children in their country of origin. Although Filipinas are the most prominent and active of the nationalities of migrant domestic workers, they come from all over the world: from Tanzania to Peru, with significant numbers from Sri Lanka and India. These have formed themselves through an organisation, formerly Waling Waling, now known as United Workers Association, into a self-conscious “community” of migrant domestic workers that meets every month in West London. There are approximately 3,000 members of United Workers Association, and of these some 200-300 attend the regular monthly meetings. They work closely with KALAYAAN, a support organisation for migrant domestic workers, most of whose members are UK citizens.

## **TRANSNATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS**

The roots of this community lie in the transnational household practises of wealthy employers. Waling Waling members were mainly, but not exclusively, women who had entered the UK as domestic workers accompanying wealthy employers. These included business people and executives, diplomats, rich tourists, and UK residents returning from abroad with their domestic staff. When work permits for resident domestic workers were phased out in 1979 the government recognised the importance of making some exceptions:

Looking at our national interest, if wealthy investors, skilled workers and others with the potential to benefit our economy were unable to be accompanied by their domestic staff they might not come here at all but take their money and skills to other countries only too keen to welcome them (Lord Reay speaking in House of Lords debate on overseas domestic workers, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1990. Hansard col. 1052)

To allow for this demand, a concession was devised under which the employer could bring in their worker under one of two categories, as ‘visitors’ or as ‘persons named to work with a specified employer’. In practice the stamp given was largely a matter of chance, and many were given a stamp under Code 5N, namely ‘Leave to enter, employment prohibited’ (see Anderson, 1993). So, these workers had all entered the UK legally accompanying wealthy employers as their cooks, cleaners, nannies, and carers, but they had not been given an immigration status independent of their employers. As the then Home Office Minister, David Waddington stated in a letter to Lord Avebury:

Admission in such cases is on the basis that the employee will be expected to leave the country with the employer, or on prior termination of the employment.

(Cited in the booklet accompanying Kalayaan's Open Space film Domestic Slavery, broadcast on BBC2 16<sup>th</sup> November 1987)

Moreover, although applications for extensions to remain with the original employers were usually granted, applications to change employers were routinely refused on the basis that no work permit was held on entry. It is important to point out, that although the Concession appeared to give some structure to the immigration status of domestic workers accompanying their employers, the reality was very different. Not only were those entering with visitors given visitors' visas (Code 3) even though they were entering for employment, but there was a 'concession culture' under which domestic workers accompanying their employers were admitted to the UK with a wide variety of visas. There were even workers entering the UK who did not come through immigration controls at all.

Whatever the stamp on the passport, there was an alarming similarity to the descriptions given by domestic workers of their living and working conditions.<sup>1</sup> Beatings, imprisonment, abuse, non-payment of wages were commonplace. This pattern was first noticed in the summer of 1984, when staff at the Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers (CFMW) in West London began to notice a pattern emerging among the Filipinos who were coming to them for advice and support. CFMW had been established in 1979 to serve the needs of the Filipino migrant community in the UK, and it was particularly concerned to act as a facilitator and supporter of groups organised by Filipinos themselves. It had participated in the largely successful campaign against the deportation of Filipino resident domestic workers (mainly working in hospitals and hotels rather than private households) in 1981-1982, and had by 1984 already helped set up several Filipino groups. It was at this time that the organisation began to be approached by numbers of women who had left abusive private employers and had subsequently become 'undocumented', living and working 'illegally'. They were coming with similar problems, - no passport, unpaid wages, no belongings and disturbing reports of brutal conditions. As the months passed and the numbers increased it was becoming increasingly difficult to respond to their needs on a case by case basis, and in November 1984 CFMW set up a meeting attended by seventeen domestic workers and ten supporters with the purpose of sharing their experiences and discussing a way forward. In this way began Waling Waling, whose membership by 1998 numbered over 3,000 with 30 different nationalities participating.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1990 Kalayaan began to keep statistics detailing the kinds of difficulties faced by workers they interviewed who had escaped from the employers whom they had accompanied to the UK. Kept annually these figures are more or less constant from year to year. In 1996-1997 195 workers were registered at the centre, and they had worked for employers from 30 different countries. Eighty four per cent reported psychological abuse, 34 physical abuse and 10 per cent sexual abuse. Fifty four per cent were locked in, 55 per cent did not have their own bed, and 38 per cent had no regular food.

So migrant domestic workers in London come together as transnational communities: to share news and information about back home; tips of remittances, gossip, cheap telephone rates etc. However they also come together as a singular transnational community, a community of migrant domestic workers. This originated when they were undocumented from the need to be with other people with whom they could be open, share experiences and be unafraid of revealing their legal status. Women of over a dozen different nationalities meet in the community centre in West London, a truly transnational gathering, but clearly bounded in one locality. Their coming together, however, goes beyond a sharing of experiences, and for this reason I would argue that it is not simply a multinational gathering, but it is indeed a “grounded” transnational community whose members are, as Guarnizo and Smith put it “bounded social actors” working within and affecting local constraints and social moorings - in this case UK immigration law, but also organising labour across borders and challenging the international denigration of reproductive labour (domestic work). As Guarnizo puts it, “Once established, the maintenance and reproduction of relations of power, status, gender, race and ethnicity become inextricably enmeshed in the reproduction of transnational social fields.” Coming together as undocumented migrant domestic workers has also resulted in new forms of social solidarity. In January 2000 Kartini, an Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Dubai, was sentenced to death by stoning for adultery when she became pregnant. A petition, calling for clemency and for her to be allowed back to Indonesia, was signed by some 250 domestic workers of many different nationalities. There was deep concern for the plight of Kartini with whom the women in London identified very closely, particular since most had worked in the Middle East. A Filipino woman who had worked in Abu Dhabi encouraged others to sign as she described graphically the stoning process, where it takes place and the ritual around it etc. So, loosened from their bounded communities, the workers have forged their own political community. The community is centred around a particular office in London which is a “safe space”. It is also reaching out to other domestic worker through the development of the European network of migrant domestic workers, “Respect”, and, in the case of the Philippines, back to the countries of origin, where links are being made with domestic workers in private households in Manila. As one immigration solicitor who works with the group put it:

“What’s good, and what is unusual is having a client group that sees itself as part of a movement”.

Most dramatically this has resulted, after over ten years of campaigning in them winning a change in the immigration rules for domestic workers entering the UK and the regularisation of undocumented workers who entered under the old system. This is transnationalism from below, a manifestation of popular resistance in the face of globalisation, self-consciously resistant and political. The forging of a common identity in despite of national, religious and ethnic differences is based first and foremost on type of employment - working as a migrant domestic worker. Domestic work in private households is, of its very nature, locality bound, like much construction work it cannot be moved. Unlike e.g. factory workers who have organised themselves only to find that the factory has moved elsewhere and they are no longer factory workers, migrant domestic workers in London, while they may lose a particular job, continue to be migrant domestic workers, because there are situations available, they have employment networks open to them, and it has until recently

been impossible, because of considerations of ethnicity and immigration status, for them to find other work. Paradoxically this limitation has also therefore contributed to the strength of the bond between them and has facilitated the growth of this self-conscious transnational community. The community has its roots in an immigration policy that resulted in large numbers of undocumented migrant domestic workers - though this was by no means a deliberate or foreseen result. It may be that current asylum legislation and procedures in the UK and elsewhere may have similar consequences.

## **INFLUENCING STATE POLICY**

How is it that undocumented workers managed to get themselves into a position whereby they could actually meet with Home Office ministers and civil servants and not risk deportation? Judicious use of the media with Waling Waling members having the courage to expose their past (often including stories of violent abuse) was what enabled them to be regarded as people with their own experiences and stories to tell, rather than as 'illegals'. It gave campaigning material a very strong human rights focus, taking individual cases of abuse, people's stories, then drawing out the role of immigration legislation in facilitating this abuse and showing the possibilities for change. This meant that the campaign could appeal to an audience not necessarily sympathetic to undocumented workers. Having statistics available bolstered the media work. It meant that women's experiences could not be passed off as simply due to a bad employer, and encouraged people to look for the structural causes of such abuse. It gave Kalayaan a reputation for having substance to their arguments and research, and also of course helped indicate the kinds of support that were necessary. In later years, when the government moved to make changes to the concession, it meant that the difference (or not) that such changes made could be monitored.

The campaign did not only rely on public support and media pressure to advance its objectives but worked to put the issue of migrant domestic workers on the agenda of other groups, both nationally and internationally. Migrant and refugee community organisations, church groups and human rights organisations lent the campaign crucial support and experience. Key to their work was their close relationship with the TGWU. As noted above, the relation with the TGWU had its roots in CFMW's earlier organising work with hotel and catering workers. Many Waling Waling members had joined the TGWU and despite the complications attached to their immigration status the union encouraged them to join and participate in branch activities, particular in union education courses. Workers were given advice and support at special meetings to advise them on what little employment rights they had. Membership of the TGWU meant that Waling Waling could bring the issue of migrant domestic workers before grassroots TGWU membership, but also gave them the opportunity to draw comparisons between their situation and that of other members, particularly women. Crucially the T&G facilitated its Waling Waling members in their public participation in the campaign - covering the cost of their travel to Labour Party conferences for example. On the campaign level, the TGWU were extremely important in using their political experience and contacts in lobbying the Labour Party, then in opposition. Targeted lobbying and campaigning work was crucial to Kalayaan's success. When the Labour Party came to power in 1997, MPs were held to account for their promises

while in opposition, and in fact largely redeemed them. It is important to remember however that this immigration “success” came within the context of a government that was regarded by many on the left as even harsher on asylum seekers than its Conservative predecessors. It was in some ways, to mix my metaphors, a tailor made carrot! The numbers affected were not large, they were women, they had clearly been abused, the change was not a big one, but it can be cited as a liberal policy by the government’s defenders.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY**

In June 1998 the labour government announced that domestic workers accompanying their employers were to come under the immigration rules, that they were no longer going to be tied to their employers, and that those who had entered under the old system were to be regularised. Such exercises are extremely rare in the UK, but nonetheless there are important lessons to be drawn from it. This is not least because of the increasing importance of domestic work in private households as a form of employment for undocumented migrant women. In more generalised amnesties that have taken place in other states (such as Greece, France and the USA) domestic workers have formed an important proportion of the target group. And there are particular difficulties for domestic workers in taking advantage of regularisation exercises that it is important to address if one wishes migrant women as well as migrant men to take full advantage of such opportunities.

Some general issues first: the period within which migrant domestic workers could apply for regularisation was set between July 1998 and July 1999 later extended to October 1999. This was a period of well publicised chaos within the Home Office as immigration departments moved offices and a disastrous computer system change resulted in large numbers of lost files and long, long delays in decision making. The existence of a deadline was problematic for some applicants - and indeed continues to be so, since those eligible might not hear of the announcement (there was no great publicity). It was particularly difficult because of the delay in establishing the criteria for regularisation. The criteria for regularising domestic workers were unclear until January 1999, meaning that advisers and their clients were reluctant to submit all but the most iron cast of applications. By December 1998 only 150 people had put in papers to the Home Office, and only three decisions had been made (all positive). Those early applicants were often among the last to receive their decisions because of the immigration department confusion. It was not unusual for applications to take over one year, and this could have devastating results on individual migrants. AS they were living through this procedure I have lost count of the number of times people told me that “It was alright when I thought I would never have my papers, when I applied was when my problem start”. Of course, as soon as their application was successful the stress caused by the delay was forgotten, but there were those who could not recover from it - for example a woman whose mother died believing that her daughter did not want to come back to her. Of 141 of those who had submitted applications, 57 described themselves as extremely concerned about the length of time taken to consider their cases. This time matter was dismissed by the immigration minister as of little consequence, after all, as long as people who deserved it got their visas in the end, what was in a matter of a few months? However, for the migrants themselves, months were very important. Having contacted relatives whom they had

not seen for many years, to tell them that they would be visiting soon and that they were going to be able to regularise their stay, people found that they were soon in the position of being disbelieved. Some people found themselves torn between responding to a family emergency - such as serious illness or death - but thereby having no chance of returning to the UK, missing the opportunity for settlement and family reunification. Moreover, this was a decision they had to make very much alone, since family back home not necessarily understanding the processes and stakes. Before the regularisation process, many women said, they did not have to make such decisions, and the stress could be considerable. The delay also discouraged applications since many people were waiting to see if their friends were successful before putting in themselves. Were it not for the work of Kalayaan and the longstanding relationship this organisation had with migrant domestic workers, the take up of regularisation would have been much lower.

It is important then to recognise the role of non-governmental organisations in regularisation exercises and how they can facilitate - or impede - the process. For many years the Home Office is the undocumented migrant's enemy, there is deep suspicion of all officials and those concerned with immigration in particular. This can only be overcome with the support of mediators, and NGOs play a crucial role in this. This was recognised in the US government's IRCA where applicants could apply through a "qualified designated entity" (QDE), though in the US this was more formalised.

Perhaps more experienced campaigners would have required that the criteria be announced at the same time as the regularisation, and at the very least, that the deadline be dependent on the criteria announcement. Moreover, unlike IRCA this regularisation a "special exercise" ie not under legal jurisdiction. So unlike IRCA unable to legally challenge operational definitions and it was extremely difficult to appeal in those cases where people were refused regularisation.

There were more specific problems with the criteria for regularisation. Moreover, when the criteria were finally clarified they resulted in considerable difficulties for many bona fide applicants, despite significant concessions from the Home Office which experienced a tension between minimising impediments to eligibility and enforcement.

The requirements for 'straightforward cases' at first sight seemed relatively simple: a valid passport; proof that one currently is employed as a domestic worker and able to support and maintain oneself without recourse to public funds (a letter from the employer stating salary details and other 'in kind' payments); and proof that one entered as a domestic worker. These documents, together with a standard application form for variation of leave to remain, and a photograph were to be sent to the Home Office. These would be processed by the Initial Consideration Unit (ICU) and, providing there were no further queries, Mike O'Brien, the Immigration Minister of the time felt that, by Easter 1999, they would be dealt with within 48 hours. More complicated cases, including those without sufficient documents would be passed to

the Case Allocation Unit (CAU) where they would have to join the notorious backlog of cases.

In practice the first problem arises with having a valid passport. Domestic workers who entered the UK under the concession typically did not hold their passport. Of those 195 workers approaching Kalayaan in 1996-97, 69 per cent had their passports taken by their employers and those who had managed to hold on to their passport had not renewed it on expiry. One of the first steps for applicants therefore was to get a new passport from their embassy. Some embassies, noticeably the Philippines Embassy, were supportive of their citizens' applications for new passports. They required an affidavit of loss, a birth certificate and marriage certificate and four photographs. Filipino citizens who work abroad are required to pay tax on their earnings to the Philippines government and regularisation applicants were retrospectively liable, but, in a special concession this was reduced to £15 a year. Other embassies however were less than helpful. The Indian High Commission for example was initially unwilling to provide replacement passports. A worker had to produce 12 photographs, a statutory declaration authorised by a notary public (approx. cost £30), pay a fee of £125 and come up with a police report that the original passport was lost or stolen. Even then it was often required that the Home Office give the visa before they would issue the passport. The first Indian workers to report their missing passports to the police, found themselves arrested and held overnight until their lawyer was able to argue them out. This scarcely encouraged people to go to the police station. The problem was not only with police stations. It must be remembered that many people find their embassies intimidating places, and there are particular problems for domestic workers, many of whom have worked (and been maltreated by) embassy staff. Of the cases known to Kalayaan, about 10 per cent entered the UK accompanying diplomats. One worker who left his diplomat employer several years ago, was extremely anxious that he might bump into him at the embassy. In the event, not only did he bump into him, he found that his former employer was in charge of issuing his new passport. The employer went so far as to tell him that he would inform the police that the man had lied in claiming the passport was lost - 'You know where it is. I have kept it!'.

Proof of current employment and that applicants were able to support themselves also in reality became extremely problematic. At first, as indicated above, the suggestion was that workers should obtain letters from their current employers as proof of employment. However, this proved very difficult. Employers were reluctant to furnish this proof because they did not want to jeopardise their own position. Fears of laying themselves open to prosecution because of employing 'illegal immigrants' were partly to blame, but the main concern seemed to be that they would render themselves liable to paying tax and national insurance. Some employers refused absolutely to sign. The migrant then had to leave their job and look for a new one, running the very real risk of unemployment since jobs were in short supply because they were a regularisation requirement. Of 141 people questioned about the regularisation process, 27 (19 per cent) had had problems getting their employer to sign a confirmation of employment, and of these, 16 (11 per cent) had consequently left their employer. These figures exclude those deterred or delaying applying because of not having employers' letters. One of the purposes of the exercise was to free domestic workers from dependence on their employers for their immigration status, yet the

necessity of a letter from their employer only reinforced this dependency. The majority of those questioned (111) were Filipinas, and if one examines only the non-Filipino applicants, difficulties with confirmation of employment are more acute: eight out of 30 (26 per cent) had problems, and five (16 per cent) had left their employers. Nine (30 per cent) of the 30 had other problems, generally difficulties with passports. It should be remembered that these applicants for regularisation are likely to be among the best supported and most well informed of those able to apply, since they were all people who attended Waling Waling meetings.

The applicant did not only have to prove that she was in employment. She had also to prove that she could support herself 'without recourse to public funds'. Most undocumented migrants do not have a bank account and are paid in cash. It was often, therefore, once again incumbent upon employers to reveal details of the salary they paid their worker, the applicant's word was not sufficient proof. This was actually rather ironic, since domestic workers claimed that the amount declared was rarely accurate, typically one week's salary was declared as the salary for an entire month, because of employers' concerns about tax. Workers who lived out had particular difficulties with the no recourse to public funds requirement because of their accommodation. They had to prove that they were living 'within their means', and that they were not occupying council accommodation. A rent book was suggested as adequate proof. However, being undocumented the majority had been forced to live for years in the shadow economy through no fault or choice of their own.

Accommodation arrangements were often rather irregular. Typically they lived in sub-let council accommodation, or in accommodation let by landlords who did not want it revealed that they had 'harboured' illegal immigrants or that they were renting properties that were legally overcrowded. Amy, for instance, was living in a room she had rented having found it from an advertisement in a newsagent's window. Her landlord refused to give her receipts for her rent or any rent book. The only 'proof' of accommodation he would give her was to sign his name in her diary on the date that she moved in. She had no proof even of address, because council tax was included in the rent, and all facilities were paid by metre, and the telephone was a call box. In such circumstances how does one prove that one is able to maintain and support oneself? Many women moved out of the accommodation they had occupied for years simply in order to have the requisite documents.

Even more difficult than all these requirements however, was the provision of proof that one had entered as a domestic worker. This difficulty arose when the Home Office moved to stating explicitly 'This only applies to those who were originally admitted to the UK with the correct entry clearance for employment as a domestic worker'. This notion of 'correct entry clearance' was extremely problematic when applied to the concession. Indeed, arguably, one of the main problems with the concession was precisely that there was no specific entry clearance granted to domestic workers. Some non-visa nationals who entered before 1990, for instance, did not have to have any entry clearance at all. As noted above, there was no single correct entry clearance for domestic workers, and the concession allowed for domestic workers to be given visitors' visas, but it seems that what was considered 'correct entry clearance' was when the worker had the employers' name written on their passport i.e. code 4. As discussed above the exact stamp on their passport was something that was completely out of the workers' control. As far as the applicants



were concerned it was particularly invidious because some nationalities were more likely to have code 4 visas than others. In particular African women seem to have been given code 3 visas. How then could one allow for such instances, of which there were many, and exclude the thousands of other overstayers who had entered on visitors' visas - which presumably the Home Office would want to do? The immigration minister responded by allowing that those workers with proof that they were working as a domestic worker when they entered the UK would be eligible for regularisation. Crucially, registration with Kalayaan, the support organisation for migrant domestic workers, would count as such proof. The registration form recorded details such as when the person first made contact, when and how they entered the country and who they were working for. This was a significant concession by the Home Office, but again many people were excluded: Kalayaan had no idea at the time of introducing such forms that they would become such valuable documents. Indeed it was precisely because of that, that the Home Office were able to give such weight to those forms, knowing that they were not falsified. Those who had registered with the group before 1990 had not had their details formally recorded, while some registration sheets had gone missing. The Home Office declared that registration after May 1997 would carry less weight, on the grounds that the Labour Party had come to power that month, and that other migrants wishing to legalise their stay could well have noted their commitment to migrant domestic workers, and registered with Kalayaan in anticipation of the regularisation announcement. In fact an analysis of the organisation's monthly statistics reveals that there was no unusual increase in registration with the group until July 1998, the month of the government's announcement.

Difficulties in meeting criteria did seem to vary to some degree with nationality. They had different impact depending on people's nationality. In part this is to do with the attitude of the employer towards the worker - and since Filipinas are more in demand and in general command higher salaries, better working conditions and greater respect from employers than other nationalities, it seems that they found it easier to get letters from their employers. In general their level of English is high, and this too is important in enabling them to negotiate with employers. Moreover, the excellent relationship between Kalayaan and the Philippines Embassy greatly facilitated the processing of passports which again meant that an otherwise serious obstacle was overcome.

Home Office caseworkers were not well informed about the regularisation. This had many consequences, even for those who successfully obtained visas. Some for instance, found that they were given a stamp on their passport, authorising them to work with the name of their employer written on it i.e. precisely the stamp that was the cause of so many problems and which the Home Office were concerned to abolish. Of those workers who, by September 1999 had been given visas, many who were eligible for Indefinite Leave to Remain had been given only one year extensions. Different Home Office caseworkers required different proofs from the regularisation applicant, some requested employers' bank details, and even employers' passports, which understandably created difficulties for their workers.

*More here on wrong stamps - recent HO explanation and attempts to deal with it. Changes from CAU to CMU. File tracking problems.*

There were also problems of representation. Unregulated 'immigration advisers' as well as registered law firms offering bad and expensive advice, are a serious problem for the migrant and refugee communities generally. Many seized on news of the regularisation to offer their services, and applicants paid between £1,500 and £4,000 to submit their papers through them. More reputable firms such as Winstanley Burgess and Douglass Luu Simons were charging between £150 and £500. However, their waiting lists were extremely long because of their specialised knowledge, and those unwilling to wait, in the first instance up to six weeks for an initial appointment, were easy prey to unreliable and expensive practitioners. One woman who fell behind on her instalment payments of £4,000 was told that if she did not come up with the money, the immigration advisers would inform the Home Office that she was 'illegal'. Even reputable solicitors were often put in the position of being perceived as Home Office proxies: in their concern to ensure that applicants put in the best possible case they made requests that, to the applicants, seemed totally unreasonable - moving accommodation, as mentioned above, for example. One woman who had lived in her council flat for twelve years was told that she should find other accommodation, since technically she was having recourse to public funds. She felt that the solicitors were thereby making totally unreasonable demands on her. Problems of communication with legal representatives were significant - 10 per cent of those questioned said that they had not heard enough from their solicitor. But there were also difficulties, particularly around language, so solicitors would write to clients requesting further information, and clients would not respond because they had not understood. *People changing solicitor - problem. Eg Bibi.* Differences of approach between different solicitors soon became apparent. So hundreds of domestic workers were adopting all kinds of strategies in order to convince an employer to sign a letter confirming employment, when one well respected solicitor affirmed that he did not think that it was so important, that a statutory declaration or a covering letter from the legal representative reporting any conversations held with the employer. These differences of approach caused some confusion among applicants, particular when combined with delays from the Home Office and the apparently random nature in which some cases were dealt with faster than others. Moreover, the stronger some cases were made the weaker others were made to appear.

Aside from the issues around regularisation criteria there are more general lessons to be drawn from this regularisation exercise. Firstly the importance, for the Home Office, of working in partnership with NGOs. Without the co-operation and support of NGOs, undocumented people simply do not trust the Home Office - indeed many are wary even with this support. NGOs can effectively mediate between individual workers and the Home Office, facilitating the regularisation process. However, NGOs must be aware of the contradictions they may encounter in acting as a gatekeeper to the Home Office, and be careful of compromising their position with their client group in the future.

Perhaps finally a salutary lesson may be drawn in the limitations of state policy. As I explained earlier, migrant domestic workers now entering the UK may change employer, and it was hoped that this would lessen the abuse and exploitation.

However, a cursory glance at Kalayaan statistics reveals the same pattern as ever - except that now, passport confiscation by employers is higher than ever, meaning that, although women have the right in law to change employers, in practise it is extremely difficult. And for those formerly undocumented and now legally residing and working in the UK, the path to normalisation still stretches on, since employers are extremely reluctant to give confirmation of employment necessary to obtain a National Insurance number - still they are dependent on an employer's signature to be able to work legally. But this is another chapter.....