

Intersections Festival Quarantine Edition: Care Work Stories Video Transcription

- You can imagine leaving your own family, sometimes your children, young children, your parents or elderly, leaving them and not knowing when you will be back.
- Our mission actually is to support care givers, not only our care givers, also immigrants, whoever is needing support.
- When we think about the projects that we've done, it's always revolved around giving care workers a space to tell their story, but also part of our work too is, as artists, we're not care workers. It's about seeing the overview of the history of care work.
- Our mandate is to fight for their rights, and then also change policies to immigration. We work together with other organizations.
- There is power in coalition building. We may have differences, and the different groups may have mandates on how they work, but we are all united, to make sure that care workers are respected for their work, and that they have their rights protected, and that they're able to live with dignity.
- It would be nice for them to come and be like oh, I learned something. I wanna share this thing that I learned to other people. And so I think what I want is a shift to happen in how we see care work, and how we see Filipino women, when you pass them by, or if you work with them. Yeah, that would be nice. Welcome everyone. My name is Althea Balmes. My pronouns are she and her.
- Hi everybody, my name is Jo Simalay Alcampo. My pronouns are she and her, they and them, and siya. We are Kwentong Bayan Collective.
- Our artistic mandate is to explore a critical and intersessional approach to community based art, labor and education. In the Filipino language kwentong bayan is the literal translation of community stories.
- Thank you all for joining us for care work stories, digital addition. This event falls on Indigenous People's History Month, and Filipino heritage month. In the spirit of this convergence, we opened our event with gangsa. These are the handheld gongs from

the mountain province of the islands now known as the Philippines, that are traditionally used during community gatherings.

- We're thanking Jhona Binos for capturing the gong players, Christine Balmas, Gemma Amba, Martha Ocampo, and dancer Genie Policarpio at her Haba exhibition in 2019. Care work stories is part of the intersession festivals that Myseum would like to invite Nadine now, director of programming, to speak about the festival.

- Thank you Althea, and thank you to everyone joining us today on national indigenous peoples' day. My name is Nadine, as Althea mentioned. My pronouns are she her, and I am the director of programming at Myseum. And for those of you who are new to Myseum, we are a museum without walls, and our aim is to tell stories and histories of the city, particularly the under represented stories, and those stories that base erasure. We do this through presenting exhibits and events, and programs across the city and of course online. And we do this in partnership, and or collaboration with individuals, collectives, organizations and institutions across the city. Today we're so grateful to be partnering with Caregiver Connections, Education and Support Organization, as well as Kwentong Bayan Collective, who has been, and is currently the artists, collective and residents at Myseum. We're so happy to be working and learning, working with them, learning from them. This program today, as Althea mentioned, part of the Intersections Festival, quarantine edition. This annual festival was canceled this year due to COVID, but we still wanted to be able to make space for our partners to share what the communities that they're working in with are currently experiencing at this time. And so we just wanted to thank everyone, again today, who is involved in the program. Jo, Althea, Mahlikah, Martha, Genie, Karen, and Cecil. And we hope that you enjoy this program today, thank you so much.

- Thank you Nadine. So Kwentong Bayan has been working with the care workers since 2013, and we've listened to many of their stories. But in this program, we will explore their long history, fighting for and winning human rights in Canada. This includes the recent movement that boldly calls for immigration status for all.

- We've also invited artists who have supported migrant communities to join us, and we'll listen to personal stories of migrant care workers, whose labor is currently keeping our community safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- As Nadine mentioned, today is the summer solstice, and National Indigenous Peoples Day. Events are being held all across Turtle Island. On this important day, we acknowledge the creator, the elementals, including lupa, Earth, hangin, wind, apoy, fire and tubig, water. All our kapua relations residing in this land guided by the Dish With

One Spoon treaty. The Dish With One Spoon teaches us to care for all, our human and non-human kapwa relations, now and for future generations. Our scars from our indigenous and black kin are being amplified in this time. We ground this event in the understanding of good relation and community care.

- While land acknowledgements are important, there are many ways to embody good relations. We are grateful that some of the people who've taught us how to embody these values through their art, their community work, stories and advocacy are here with us today. One of them is Mahlikah Awe'ri. Mahlikah is a spoken word artist, educator, echo influencer and much, much more, who shifts paradigms through an indigenized way of knowing, and being. Reimagining what it means to be in relation to the land and to each other. Mahlikah visited CCESO's human rights and leadership and training program in 2019. Her session was entitled "We are of Earth and sky. "Oppressive awareness through an indigenous lens." Today we invite Mahlikah to speak about this work. Welcome Mahlikah.

- Hello.

- [Jo] Hello.

- Yeah, I'm so honored to be sharing space with you today, especially on this day, because it is, as was mentioned summer solstice, as well as indigenous people's history day. I kind of wanted to start with just acknowledging the advocacy that went into making this day the day that it is. It didn't just happen. And I'm sure actually the advocacy predates the 1980s, but that's where the documentation actually begins, that in the 80s there were many indigenous organizations, political groups, community members that were really advocating to have a day to acknowledge the contributions of the past, present and future indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, but specifically Kanata, Canada. And so for the Inuits, and the Metis, and first nations people, this was really important. But their advocacy went unheard, essentially, until the 90s, and it really was because at that time, the world commission was putting together a report on the state, I guess, of indigenous peoples in Canada, and it was kind of scathing. It highlighted a lot of the same things that we see today, in terms of inequities, and racism. And one of the recommendations was we need to have an actual day that honors indigenous peoples in this country. And so in 1996, that's when the day actually became, I guess, law, and what's also kind of ironic is 1996 was the year that the last residential school closed in Canada. In 2017, under Justin Trudeau's leadership of the country, the name changed from Aboriginal Peoples History Day to Indigenous Peoples History Day. So it actually wasn't officially Indigenous Peoples History Day until 2017. So again, advocacy, advocacy is always at the heart of trying to make these things a

reality. To all of the community members, all of our folks who spoke up and pushed for this, I just wanna also give you a big shout out today, otherwise we wouldn't be having this day. How can you engage in this day? If we weren't in this pandemic, we would probably be attending a lot of different concerts, pow wows, film screenings, talks that really center indigenous identity, culture, history, all of those things. But a lot of those events, of course, are going on today, but they are viral in nature. So really you can probably Google a lot of this stuff. Some events are on Facebook, some events are happening through different websites, but they are happening. But besides the celebrating, I think it's really important that we reflect on how much work we still need to do, in terms of advocating for basic human rights for indigenous peoples in Canada, who are still living in third world conditions, both on reserve and off reserve. So we still have some work to do. And when I think about it, I think about the fact that we're not fully following the UN's declaration of indigenous people's rights, in many of these cases. So when we think about how many indigenous youth make up the criminal justice system, or are in care, compared to other young people. When we think about the inequities around healthcare and mental health services, and the fact that a lot of indigenous peoples have the highest rates in the country around suicide, around diabetes, tuberculosis. And of course, health impairments that are related to the quality of their drinking water. We still have over 100 first nations communities in Canada that do not have drinkable water, which is completely unacceptable. We also think about the state of lateral violence towards indigenous communities from the RCMP, from the police, from the man camps that are set up in communities to create pipelines, which are destroying mother Earth. And how that puts our women, our girls, our trans and our two spirit folks at risk for lateral violence. When we think about the inquiry, and why aren't we implementing the things that we've asked for to protect our women and our girls, and our two spirit and trans folks. All of those things, we still need to push. We still have to pressure our leaders, and our governments for those things. When I think about housing, and the lack of affordable housing, and quality housing for indigenous peoples. When I think about the education, and the fact that we should actually be determining how we educate ourselves as indigenous peoples. It should be more land based. It should incorporate our culture and our languages. Lots of work still to be done, and those are the ways that non-indigenous folks can actually be really engaged today. Reflect on those things, and think about community organizations and movements that you can support, that are on the ground doing that work. I think that's really, really important. As was mentioned, I had the honor of doing a facilitation with all of these wonderful care workers, and the focus was really just opening up a space where folks who are actually, in my opinion indigenous, but indigenous to another part of the world, having a better understanding of the actual truth around the history and herstories of indigenous peoples on this land that we call Turtle Island. So understanding colonialism. Understanding the Indian Act. Understanding the current

state of environmental racism, and thinking about also how in other homelands, these things also happened, and that's why I think it's also important that we have these conversations, so that we can see how we can better support each other. A lot of what we're experiencing is very intersectional, and I think that when we look at what's happening right now, with all these movements, which are bringing indigenous, black, and POC folks together, marching in the streets, demanding justice for one another. The reason for this is because we are literally in the eighth fire, and for indigenous peoples, the eighth fire is the prophecy where the next generation, and you're seeing a lot of these movements being led by teenagers, youth, in their 20s, who are basically saying enough is enough. I don't wanna see the next seven generations dealing with this, this has to end. This level of oppression, racism, discrimination on all levels needs to stop. And particularly the state violence by police, by RCMP, and that's why you're seeing everyone calling for defunding, divesting, and dismantling these police services, because they really were birthed out of colonization. The police were birthed out of slavery. During the Atlantic slave trade, when Africans were forced here in the Americas, the first policing was really overseers, which basically were responsible for keeping slaves enslaved, Africans enslaved. So that's how the police actually came to be. And the RCMP was essentially birthed out of colonization, to keep indigenous peoples monitored, and under surveillance. In the Indian Act, this all comes together. We know that these systems come out of violence, colonial violence, so why are we upholding them? We need to break them down, because they're still harming and hurting our people. Right now I'm just really honored to see so many of us coming together from different cultural backgrounds, calling for change. And the other piece around that is for us to really do a better job as indigenous, black and POC folks, of not getting caught up in oppression Olympics. So we shouldn't be competing and saying my oppression is more important than your oppression. I think right now it's about supporting where and who needs to be supported, and that's the end of it. We're definitely going to respect each of our movements, each of our calls to action, and find ways to be in solidarity with each other. In other words, to be in all my relations, which is really the indigenous way of knowing and being, on how you treat another person. This is interwoven into our wampums. This is interwoven into our treaties. This is interwoven into our governance systems, as indigenous peoples. So the call right now for black liberation, and the call for indigenous sovereignty are both interrelated, because we are on stolen people, we're all on stolen land, and there are stolen people on these lands, and we need to acknowledge that. That's why I think this solidarity is so, so important. Myself, I've been out there. Many of you know since the protest basically started a couple of weeks ago, and I've just been trying to give my medicine, which is my presence, my voice, my drum to ensure that we are moving forward, because we need a change. This is all related. What's happening to our care workers, our migrant workers is all related to what's happening to all of us, under these

oppressive systems, that we've had to navigate way, way too long. We need to support each other in achieving these human rights. I think the last thing that I want to touch on was really around the medicines that we have right now. I think another reason why indigenous peoples were so adamant about having Indigenous Peoples History Month in June, and that day on summer solstice and in June, it's because June is also strawberry moon month. So for our people, each month is represented by a particular medicine. It is also guided by a particular clan mother. So during the month of June, it's strawberry moon month, and the clan mother is story teller woman. So I think it's so appropriate that we are sharing stories today. The stories of predominantly women, who are care workers. When we think about the strawberry, the strawberry's medicine is that when you look at it, it actually looks like a heart. We consider it a heart berry, and that heart medicine is about reconciliation, authentic reconciliation, not performative allyship, not any of that, but really reconciling an authentic apology for any of the wrongs that you may have engaged in. Now how are you going to make those wrongs right? What are you actively going to do? And you're gonna do it from an anti-racism framework, right? And so when I think about the medicine that we're being gifted on these lands, these indigenous lands, it's that remembering that we need to speak from the heart. That we need to speak the truth, and that's what story telling is. Story telling is about speaking your truth. It's about being vulnerable. It's about sharing parts of yourself that are very, very personal, but yet powerful, because they have the capacity to change somebody's heart, to make someone feel differently about the way that they perceive you, the way they think about you. And hopefully shift a behavior of racism, or discrimination against people. We shouldn't be holding those things against each other, we are all beings, we are all spirit, we are all connected, we are all part of this web of life. And so we need to treat each other with that level of respect and dignity, as was mentioned in the opening video. That's what all my relations is. We are relating with our hearts this month, and we are engaged in that reconciliation, that forgiveness. And forgiveness can only be given to you when you provide an authentic apology with action. What is the action that you are willing to make with that apology? It's not enough to say "I'm sorry". It's not enough to say "I apologize", and we know this as indigenous peoples, with the truth and reconciliation report. We don't want an apology, we want action. How are you actually going to change so that future generations never experience these things? So that's really what that strawberry moon energy is all about this month, and speaking our truth. And you know what, the whole summer is going to be held with berry medicine. Next month, which is around the corner, we're going to be in raspberry moon month. So we move from the heart to the womb. The raspberry represents the womb, and so that is another form of medicine. And when we think about the womb, the womb represents our first home. So how are we taking care of home? And home is not just a place but it's a promise. So how are we actually upholding the promises of this land, when indigenous people promise that

they would only take what they need, that they would always make sure that everyone had enough. That they would always make sure that they were stewards, and care takers of this land. How are we going to reinvest in those promises? So those are the kinds of things that we're actually thinking about, medicine wise, while we are protesting, while we are demanding justice, while we are dismantling, defunding, divesting, that's what we're actually holding, that powerful medicine. So I want you to think about that. I want you to remember that there is medicine happening, and that's gonna give us some extra strength, some extra energy to come together. So again, I just wanna say a big to all of the care workers across Turtle Island, who as you heard, they sacrifice so much to provide care. What is care from an indigenous point of view? Care is an unselfish act of stewardship. It is an unselfish act of being able to hold space, protect, nurture, all of those things, and it is done knowing that people are making huge sacrifices, and are in many cases not being respected, and not being honored properly, or compensated properly for their work, for their labor, and that's unacceptable. That continues a chain, or an energy that started with first contact here, where our women were stolen from their communities, and had to provide care for other families. When we think about the Sixties Scoop. When we think about residential schools, young children being turned into domestic workers, especially our girls. We know what the history of care worker looks like, when it is colonized, but we also understand it from an indigenous point of view that care giving is an act of love, and when you give from your heart, that needs to be reciprocated. And so that's the call that I'm asking on behalf of all of these care workers. You need to find a way to reciprocate that in a good way, because you are on indigenous land, and we're holding you to those promises. Thank you so much.

- Woohoo! Thank you so much Mahlikah for your heartfelt sharings, your good mind, and your authentic fire. We follow Mahlikah on her social media as well, you'll see it on the chats, where she offers teachings to the community, and is a leader in this movement. We'll also be posting in the chat information about "Not another black life", the current movement, and actions happening in Nathan Phillips Square, which requires support, and for us to show up. We will answer the call. Thank you so much Mahlikah.

- [Mahlikah] Thank you.

- Thank you Mahlikah, very affirming.

- [Mahlikah] Bless you.

- So let's continue, and hear from our panelists. I'm gonna invite our panelists, we'll begin with Martha, and just tell us who you are, your pronoun and what your role is, and what we'll talk about today.

- Hi, this is Martha Ocampo. I'm with the Caregiver Connections, Education and Support Organization, in short CCESO. I'm a member of the advisory, and my pronoun is she and her.

- Thank you Martha. I'm gonna invite Genie now to talk about who she is, what her role is, and what we'll talk about today.

- Hi, good afternoon everyone. I'm Genie Policarpio. My pronoun is she and her. I am one of the cofounding member of the advisory committee. Thank you.

- Thank you Genie. And then finally we'll invite Karen into the space, and we'll ask her what the pronouns are, and the role in the community, and what we'll talk about today.

- Hi, my name is Karen Ancheta. My pronouns are she and her. I am a theater practitioner, story teller, and cofounder of Porchlight Theater. Today I'm gonna maybe share a little bit about the process of the story telling program that we went through with the care workers.

- Amazing, thank you. Thanks everybody for joining us. Before we begin, we want to talk briefly about the history of care work, in what is now known as Canada.

- Althea and I have been working, been honored to work with CCESO since 2013, and we've featured some of the stories by migrant workers in our comics. Some are published in this anthology "Drawn To Change, Graphic Histories "of Working-Class Struggle". We'll post the link in the chat.

- In 2017, Kwentong Bayan was invited by a graphic history collective to participate in the Redraw, Resist, Remember poster project. It's an intervention in the Canada 150 conversation. So we created a poster featuring 150 plus years of care work, performed by racialized women in Canada. This poster project included an essay by Ethel Tungohan. This poster is available for free, and you can download it online, and we'll post that link in the chat.

- Time doesn't allow us to cover all of the history of care work in Canada, so we'll focus on some highlights. We're gonna start with this excerpt from our poster, from 1600s to 1800s, slavery was practiced in Canada, then known as New France, from 1632 until

abolished in 1834. Indigenous women and enslaved Africans were referred to as domestiques, or servants. Residential schools operated in Canada for more than 160 years, with upwards of 150,000 first nations, Metis and Inuit children who were taken from their homes, and placed in these industrial schools. Girls were forced to do domestic labor, and were treated as enslaved workers. The residential school system was just one tool used to colonize indigenous peoples.

- Then after World War II, Canada recruited domestic workers from British colonies, mainly Jamaica and Barbados. These women received low pay, and no option for permanent residency until the West Indian Domestic Scheme of 1955, which allowed them to work in Canada for a year as a domestic worker, before gaining landed immigrant status. The domestic scheme was replaced with a non-immigrant employment authorization program, which is now the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

- Next we'll move to the late 70s. In order to meet the high demand for care givers in Canada, some immigration officials advised women not to declare their children back home. Seven Jamaican mothers were deported for following this advice. A national protest campaign was launched, and the rallying cry was "Good enough to work, "good enough to stay." With community support, the women presented their case to the Supreme Court and won the right to stay in Canada. In 1983, Makeda Silvera published "Silenced", talked with working class Caribbean women about their lives and struggles as domestic workers in Canada. Women from Trinidad, St. Vincent, Antigua, St. Lucia, Guyana and Jamaica shared their stories about the sacrifices they made to support their families back home, and their working conditions in Canada, including forced overtime, unpaid wages, employers who regularly broke employment contracts, and experiences of sexual abuse and harassment. In the 1970s, the feminist organization Intercede was formed. They fought to have domestic work recognized as valuable work.

- This is an archival photo featuring the cast of *If My Mother Could See Me Now*, Inay Kung Alam Mo Lang. Most were domestic workers. The play told their stories and was produced by Carlos Bulosan Theater. In the 70s, Filipino community members started noticing a rise in Filipino women migrating to Canada alone as temporary workers. Martha, I'm gonna invite you into this, and ask you to tell us more about the time when Filipinos became the majority of the workforce in care work.

- Yeah, thank you Althea, and Jo. Actually in the 70s, there were already quite a few Filipino women arriving in Canada, as domestic workers, and there was also an organization called International Association of Filipino Patriots, mainly activists that

were fleeing from the Marcos dictatorship, and were in Canada and in the United States. One of the things that they noticed is that there are so many Filipino women here as domestic workers, and they are so vulnerable to all sorts of abuse, including racism. I think they began working with a few women in the community who were very much interested in really organizing themselves, so that they can begin to advocate for their rights. During that time, there was also something happening in the Philippines, with the Marcos dictatorship, and there was an organization called Coalition Against the Marcos Dictatorship that was also very much active both in Canada and in the US. So between IAFP, and CAMDI, I was part of that group. We started really organizing the women, and making sure that they took the leadership, and we were part of the folks that were really supporting them, in terms of doing lobby work, and going through the streets, and doing all kinds of advocacy work. And also collaborating with other organizations, and other domestic workers from other countries. I think finally in 1981, there was the foreign domestic movement called FBM, where domestic workers with temporary work permit were allowed to apply for permanent residents, once they complete two years of live in work. Now you will find that for every program that is introduced by the government, it takes forever, it takes years. 1981, there was 1992 where they have the live in care giver program, called LCP, where the domestic workers were now allowed to apply for permanent residency after two years working in Canada. They must live with their employers, which makes them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. While women were advocating for changes in the policy, they were always very active in the community. Every year you will find that a lot of the Filipino domestic workers were doing the very large community national day of celebration, achievement back here in Toronto, where there was the acknowledgement of the contributions made by these women, but also looking at what is happening back home in the Philippines. Very much while they do a lot of bloody work here, or advocacy, they're also always thinking of their folks back home, what is going on. So for example now, 2020, there is this new bill, anti terror bill that is now being introduced in serving government, and then the women are very active. CCESO, for example, is very active in trying to organize some kind of education, so that people understand what is going on in the Philippines. So both the work here in Canada, always make sure that they are thinking also of their folks back home. In 2001, there was the Ontario Employment Standard Act, which came into effect, where workers were granted some rights, as other employees. But you know, a lot of things are never really followed. Employers are not checked whether this is happening, so I think it has always been a problem, because there was really no one that's checking whether employers were following this. In 2010, there was this very significant, one of the harder law, which made sure that there was no more medical exam for people who are applying for permanent residence for the second time. Again, this is law and yet it has never been followed. We still find that even today, people are still asked to do a second exam for

their permanent residency. Other than what was already mentioned, women was always very much part of many other things, including learning new skills. I think when they joined the Carlos Bulosan Theater to start a play, produce a play called *If My Mother Could See Me Now*, one of the things that we thought was really, really significant was a lot of these women never had any kind of theater experience, but they came out to be really, really, really good actors. Also they learned a lot, they learned a lot of skills, and we were able to actually show this play twice here in Canada, in Toronto, then we took it to British Columbia, all over BC, as well as in Manitoba.

- Thank you so much Martha. Thank you so much for talking about the popular theater, and how it's been part of the community. We're gonna return to that when we talk to Karen, and Genie about the popular theater, and how it's used as story telling, for the education and care work. I just wanna go back to this slide here. This is a comic that Kwentong Bayan did on Philippine National Day, and it features the late Fely Villasin, and the late Sherona Hall. This is actually a memory of mine from the 90s, when the Philippine National Day, which was the alternative to Philippine Independence Day, was held in Seaton Park. I remember care givers were often present, not just in the event, but in the organizing. One thing I wanted to ask you about, was this the protocol that the Philippine National Day Committee followed, which is not just to focus on issues back home, but also to link them to issues in Canada. Because I remember Sherona Hall was speaking about women's rights, health through women's health and women's hands, representing that organization. And then the theme back home was on reproductive rights, the women's movement in the Philippines. Could you tell us more about Philippine National Day, and how care workers were involved in the organizing?

- Like I said, Philippine National Day was really organized mainly by the coalition against the Marcos leadership. There was such a large support from the community, who were willing to be part of that event, but not necessarily come out and do protests, only a few of us. But one of the things that was always so important for Philippine National Day was the acknowledgement of the contributions that are made by the Filipinos here, so including care work. And also, what are the things that they are struggling here in Canada, such as racism, reproductive rights, and all kinds of other issues that are being struggled by care workers. But also we always had to mention what is going on in the Philippines, and what are the things we can do to expose, for example, the Marcos dictatorship, and all the other human rights violations that's going on in there. So we're still very much connected, our family's there, and also our heritage, Philippine heritage is so important to us. I think that was something that we did every year, but we also discovered so many talents. It was one of the main source of people who would come up with their talent, whether it is a song, or a dance, or whatever, and some of them became very famous actually, from then on. I think that

Philippine National Day was like a really big space, and a big event that people so looked forward every year. Some of them would start putting their tent the night before, because they wanted the picture, they had very good space, because it's Seaton Park, and we had about 10,000 people.

- Wow. Wow amazing. Thank you Martha. There's such a wealth of history and memories, it's kind of nice to hear, as a young person. But what I liked was that you talked a little bit of Juana Tejada, and the screen that we're showing right now was from an exhibition that we did at Blackwood Gallery a few years ago. This is a picture with community members remembering Juana Tejada, and as you said, was kind of like a leader in the movement. And to give folks a little bit more context about Juana Tejada, she arrived in Canada under the live in care giver program in 2003, and for three years, she worked from 6:30 a.m. to bedtime, caring for children, and fulfilling other household chores. After 24 months, she applied for permanent residency, but was denied because she was diagnosed with cancer during that process, and Canada deemed her to be a burden to the healthcare system. All throughout her health issues, and PR being denied, Juana Tejada and community members advocated for justice, and in 2010, the Juana Tejada Law came into effect, which lifted the medical admissibility clause in the permanent Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, in relation to care givers application for permanent residency. But sadly Juana Tejada died in 2009, but her legacy lives on in the form of this law. And it's unfortunate that even with the law, the government doesn't really follow that, that's really frustrating.

- Yes, we need more than words, we need action and justice. We're gonna move to the next slide, which shows yourself, Martha, and some members of CCESO, including the late Coco Diaz, who was one of the original members of the ad hoc community for land and status, in the 1970s. This was a core group of domestic workers who fought and advocated for their own rights, to be allowed status in Canada. And so this picture's from November 2014. Care givers and allies demonstrated again outside the immigration offices in downtown Toronto. It had been 33 years since domestic workers won the right to apply for permanent residency status after two years of live in work, but in 2014, the government announced that it was replacing the live in care giver program with the care giver program. And only 5500 temporary workers, which includes care workers, could apply for permanent residency each year. Martha, can you please tell us about how this current program change has affected the lives of temporary migrant workers?

- This was introduced by the conservative government, and it has two pathways, child care and the other is for high medical needs, but like you mentioned, it was only accepting 5500 applicants. So if there were 10,000 applicants who were able to, after

the requirement, still they were only accepting 5500. We thought that was a good program because they were able, now this particular program allowed families to, no, no, allowed people to be able to go and not live in, not work as a live in. Unfortunately, there wasn't anything done to help them, how they can live outside of their employer. So I think that was a big thing, where people are saying great, we don't have to live in anymore, however they don't have money to pay for their transportation back and forth, and there was something for find accommodation and other things. I think it was not really a good program. So this was followed, after the conservative put this out in 2014, 2019 comes in the liberal government, and then they put up this new pilot care giver program. It's again just had few changes from the BC program, but the worst thing about it is that it was still continuing the requirements, which is for them to be able to apply for permanent residency, they have to have the education requirement, as well as the language requirement, which we find they are not really relevant when they are performing their skills. I think what is so important now is to really continue with the work that we have been doing, in terms of lobbying for change, because I think COVID-19 actually crystallized the importance of the work that our care workers are doing, in terms of their work in really essential and permanent. So if we go back to the 1600, when you were going through the history, you'll find that there hasn't been any meaningful child care, kind of program or services for the elderly, or people with high medical needs, so therefore, care work is so essential, and permanent. So really, land status should be the case for all women who are coming here as care workers.

- Thank you Martha, and I know we're going to return back to you to talk about this campaign, launched by the migrant rights network, for full immigration status for all. So we'll do that later in the program. We wanna also say thank you to those who are on the chat, who are joining us online from all around, and you're welcome to start dialogues, or ask questions here as well. We're gonna shift now to a discussion on art and activism.

- So we're gonna invite Genie, because last year she was part of Myseum Intersections, where you shared your story as a migrant care worker, and a founding member of CCESO. Can you please tell us more about CCESO's work in the community, and in particular the human rights and leadership training program.

- [Genie] Our Caregiver Connections, Education and Support Organization actually is a voluntary run program. It was founded in 2009 by group of women, led by Martha Ocampo. CCESO is an organization that where newcomers and then migrant workers, and care workers, which we name now as care workers, where they were called care givers in the past. They are empowered by CCESO, by recognizing their strength, and also their resiliency, and their commitment to make meaningful change in the system,

and also in themselves, and in the community. And so CCESO provides different range of activities and programs, including supportive counseling, because we have our members, our board members, and our advisory committees, we're former staff of Intercede, and also former members of Intercede alike. What happens now is that before we form CCESO, we were already part of the community dealing with issues, and doing advocacy for care givers. As I myself was a care giver, when I came here in 1999, 1998, rather. And I became part of the Intercede, as a general member, and from that day. Oh.

- [Woman] Freezing.

- It's okay Genie, we can still hear you, you can keep going.

- Okay, sorry. So what happened was that since I became member of Intercede, I continued to be part of it, even I left already Intercede in 2007. So when CCESO was formed, we continued the legacy that our late Fely Villasin had left. I would say that I became also one of the first participants of advocacy and leadership training, that was the name in the past, and now being renamed as human rights and leadership training, that started in 2000, that continues every year, until today. I would say that we have lots of participants every year, that are ranging from 17 to 24 graduates. Some of the graduates have stayed with us, and then became part of the community doing advocacy pieces, and then also they were able to exercise their rights as a care giver. They realized that, as myself have realized in the past, that immigration policy was very inequitable, not equitable to migrants workers, because we were taken advantage of. And also what happened was that being a care giver, lots of us were not able to voice, they were not able to fight for their rights, for the reason that they fear what will happen to their status. They may be losing their job. They would risk their job, or they may be sent home for whatever reason that they could be accused of. So we had lots of histories that happened. So that's why I'm continuing the work of Intercede. So CCESO was able to provide, even though we are only volunteers, we only spare our time after our office hours, or on weekends. We are thankful to Martha that she stayed with us all these years. CCESO is not only giving that advocacy training, or human rights leaderships training, we also have socialization, because there are lots of care workers who didn't have the chance to go out of their home, or out of the town. So we provided also trips outside of the province, and also outside of Toronto every year, and then we have also education and information meeting. And then we also organized, we also collaborate with other organization, and organize campaigns to do lobbying with the changes in the policy integration. Continuing to do this work, and then giving that kind of support to care workers, who arrive in Canada, who were not able to find ways how to help themselves, because of the fear that we already talk about. If there are

organization that could listen to them, it means we were able to collaborate together, in order for us to change the system, and then also, we will be able to make our lives better. I will say that we thank you for also hosting this event, in the sense that we were able to voice out, so lots of people will hear what's going on, because we all know for a fact that people don't believe, or they don't see, or they believe but then still employers taking advantage of you, because they know that you fear of what's going to happen. Another thing is that there are lots of employers that they know that you have the rights, but they take advantage of you. They will still say that because you are not permanent status, because the reason why I say that is that during the first time that I looked for employment, as a care giver, when I was being released by my first employer, I was asking for my salary, and then I was told that I cannot have that salary, because that is for permanent status. If you had landed status, then you can get that salary. And I was told I don't have Canadian experience, and then I asked my employer, and then I said what's the difference between Canadian and international experience, as a care giver. And then now the employer could not give me any answer, so she gave me the salary, but I was told I could not get an increase. And then I said I was fine with that, as long as she was giving me that salary, and then that's when I realized that if you don't have status, you are on temporary work permit, it means you won't be given the same rights as permanent status. If you don't have that paper, you won't get that status, unless otherwise you know how to speak for yourself. Not everyone will be able to speak for themselves, because of fear.

- I think this is a good segue to the question around the emphasis of worker, and care work, because we've seen all throughout the history of care work here in Canada, it's been from domestic work, to live in care giver, not to care giver, and now this term care worker, which a lot of care workers themselves are asking for. Can you expand on why this care worker is so important?

- Okay, so what happened is the reason why it was changed, because we'd been working with other organizations, under the Migrants Rights Network. After careful deliberation, because of the name care giver, as we all know, we women, we were born all care givers, and therefore we were expected to give care for free. What happened was that we all know we heard that from many people, and yes also from early speakers. They were saying that we are care givers, so it means automatically we give care. So what happens now is that that's being taken advantage of, because many employers have claimed you are a member of the family. Being member of the family, it means when they need you, you should be there all the time, and give care to their children, or to the elderly when they needed you. Either after 5 o'clock, or 7 seven o'clock, you are needed at night, and also on weekends, but for free, you are not being paid with all those overtime that you have worked. They should be compensated for all

the work they have done, but how many will do that? Because basically it is in the system, what happens is that the system allowed employers to do that. As I gave the example earlier, when I was being asked, when I asked for my salary, because I was not permanent status here, because I was part of the family, all right? So now after careful deliberations of organizations, of different organization member of the MRN, so what happens now is that we decided that care givers, the name care givers will be changed to care workers, to align with farm workers, with nurses. Because imagine that all care givers or care workers who came here, they are nurses, they are also teachers, they could be business administrator. They have degrees in their hands, and then when they came here, they are undervalued. We are undervalued. And then what we are asking for is that maybe with the kind of change in the name, employers would recognize we are workers, not member of the families. You have to compensate us, you have to value our work as care worker. Recently, just last week we had our campaign status for all, and we are demanding, certainly for us, and then as Martha also mentioned, COVID-19 actually crystallized that, and it has been proven that care worker is an essential work.

- Yeah, thank you Genie. Really good emphasis on work, needing to be compensated, and care work is about compensating them as workers. In the process of working with you all, what I really appreciated is the power of story telling, as part of advocacy, and how art can go hand in hand with community work. Karen, this is your second collaboration with CCESO story tellers. What has that experience been like for you?

- Thanks Althea. The experience has been incredible. I always leave the sessions on a Sunday inspired, and I am so honored to be invited into the room to cheer on, and witness the care givers go through the program that you've set up. I think Jo had asked me before how do I guide the care workers into embracing their story telling spirit? Such a good question. I started to think about my own guide, and I have to embrace my own learning and education, in order to guide. Something Mahlikah said, I can't remember exactly what she said, but I wrote down first story telling home. I started to think about, I studied classically, I went to Ryerson Theater School, but I never really found my first story telling home until I was at CBT, the Carlos Bulosan Theater, which was founded by the late Fely Villasin, and then taken over by Nadine Villasin, and Renna Reddie, and currently with Leon Aureus. That group was formed, and theater and story telling was used as a tool for the care giving community advocacy. I'm so aware that this is where my practice has sprouted. I look at all of the creations, from that company, like People Power, and The Shadow of Elfin that they are powerful stories of people, and their struggles, and resistance. And then I think about the collective creation spirit that comes through that organization, that's always been there, and I see it has come out, and the artistic groups, like the Tita Collective, Sulong Theater, Pulang Maleta, Kapwa Collective, Amihan, Uwi Collective, the work of

musicians, DATU, Pantaiu, Minerva. Story teller dancers and Fly Lady Di. Gathering organizations such as Kapisanan Center, and businesses like Vinta, just to name a few , that all have the fighting spirit within them, and those organizations, and their artistic practices. That is the spirit which I am filled by. Those are the seeds. For our process, I realized that I went through the Rs, to relax, to reflect, to receive, to resonate, to remember, and to record. We always gather in a circle with the care workers, and we take theater games, and we apply them to story telling. I find that with the theater games, it really helpful in building trust, and cooperation, and it's just lovely to be able to have that comradery and to share in a safe space, to reflect. I like to do little exercises about brain storming for short bursts of time, and it just helps the care workers remember. They're so busy, they have so many things on their plate, and it's so nice to have this little chunk of time, just to remember and to take stock. And sometimes it's about a slice of life memory that they share, and sometimes it's about taking stock, and really seeing their journey, and then sharing their journey with the group. It's quite beautiful. Another R, to receive. To listen, to acknowledge each other's experience and journey, and then also get the feedback in that circle. It's so affirming, and I witnessed it several times. It's super beautiful. And to resonate. Once we take our stories, and actually when we did them for Myseum the first round, with a group of seven, we would volley the stories back and forth. We would meet, and then they would write their stories, and then they would send them to me, and then we'd have private digital coaching sessions, which were amazing. And then we'd get some back, and then we'd go back and forth, and back and forth. And actually it kind of prepared us for COVID , because we did this already last year, and then we meet again, and then we share and we adjust. So I look at my role as kind of like I just help them sculpt. I help them remember. I help them find clarification, and help the audience, and when they do share, they'll look at the best of their story. One of the other things is, in the theater explorations, how does it feel to fill up the space, physically, vocally? I think that kind of theater exercise is helpful wherever you go. It's hard to take up space when you're living in someone else's home, I imagine. I feel like what we're doing with theater, and story telling is advocacy, and activism. It's all related, it's all the same. It's about giving people a voice, and an outlet. And I was going to say, I guess that sort of combined, to remember. The writing exercises that we do to record our memories. And then the last part is to record, and then to share actually. Our process at Myseum was culminated in a presentation, and the care workers were able to share their stories. Sometimes they were a slice of life, and sometimes they were a journey of how they got here. A lot of people, I think, had talked to the care workers in the lobby and said oh my gosh, your story, that's my story too. I think that's the goal. I think that we need to tell stories that reflect other people's experiences, and it's such a gift. I tell my care giver students that it's like you're allowing people to step into your shoes, just for a moment. If you're able to step into someone else's shoes, it just fosters a greater

understanding of what actually they're going through. So that's pretty much the process, yeah.

- Thank you so much Karen, and someone in the chat is saying that your creative process is great, and they wanna know how to get in touch with you, so we're going to post--

- Of course, no problem.

- Karen's IG contact in the chat. But I had another question, we have Cecil is one of the care workers who told us the double double story last year at Myseum Intersection, about the first coffee that she ordered in Canada, and her memories of her own family growing coffee plants in the Philippines, it was beautiful, moving story, and hilarious too. Karen, you've worked closely with Cecil again this year. Could you please tell us more about that process? And introduce the story that Cecil will be sharing today.

- Yes absolutely. Cecil is fantastic. She's one of the many care givers that have come through the program, and her story about her first coffee in Canada still stays with me. I just love that story. Cecil wrote me a note after and said, I forgot that I love telling stories. I forget that my lola, my grandma used to tell me stories. Then this round, she wrote another one, and the story came out of her so quickly. What struck me about it was how she is taken back into a memory of her grandma telling her a story, and in the end, she realizes that she is the heroine of her own story, and having her children see that she can be the heroine of her own story, it just means everything. So we're not gonna share that story, but she was inspired by everything that's going on right now, she needed to write. So she put this little piece together, and it was because she had colleagues and friends that had stories. She took them, and she needed to tell them. I think that's the whole point of the program, to be a voice for someone else that can't. I'm honored and thrilled that Cecil wanted to share her story with us.

- Thank you and we'll watch the recording right now. Thank you.

- Housekeeping in downtown, under a cleaning company. I also do part-time nannying that is an on-call basis, and that's a reported income too. During lockdown, I lost my day income. I wasn't laid off in my night job, so I'm not eligible for E.I. With my salary \$1200 to \$1300, I wasn't qualified for Expanded CERB, but I took the chance and applied anyway. My thoughts, I'm working with great risk and not compensated. I am just earning my keep, but in case I will have to pay it back, I will. This is better than using my credit card to supplement my family needs. Chances are, it might be considered, since I'm allowed a low income. I know a woman, let's called her Pacita.

Like me, she worked on a cash basis, but has other jobs too. One is in the same building as me cleaning, 5 to 10 p.m. weekdays. The other one is from an agency that is supplying workers to any kind of job, ranging from event servers, grocery, like chopping vegetables, and factory worker, and also clean houses for cash. It's not secure. It's only temporary. Pacita was hoping to be laid off, so she can apply for CERB. Unfortunately she wasn't laid off. So she took another day job, just to compensate her lost agency income. She didn't take a chance with CERB, unlike my story. Do you want to know what she says? She says, "I don't want to apply for CERB "if only I have to pay it come tax filing." Do you have time for another one? Let me tell you about Edwin. He's also working in the same building as us. He was laid off. But Edwin has another job in the morning, earning \$15 an hour for eight to nine hours. During lockdown, his earning in his day job increases due to hired work. This didn't affect his earnings, gave him extra hours on weekends. He tried to apply for CERB but wasn't approved. The poor guy has two young girls, not to mention a mortgage. His wife has to stop working to take care of the girls and her father, who is living with them. This pandemic poses so much risk to everyone, not only in health, but also financially. That unfairness is so apparent. For me, I would love to stay home and keep my family safe, but I have to risk deployment, or worse, I have to find a new job when this is over. When this will be over? Who knows? You have listened to my friend's stories. Is this all okay for you? This is as far as I learn from their situations. I could ask them if you need more information, where I'm sure they will like to remain just a name. For as long I have known them, they aren't really as vocal with their worries. But I hear them. I know their stories. This is my advocacy. This is what I've learned. Be the voice of those who can't.

- Thank you so much Cecil, and Karen, we really appreciate you sharing those stories, as part of care work stories digital edition. As a courtesy, we're going a bit over time, and just wanted people to know. If you can't stay 'til past, we're going to keep going for a bit longer. Folks can always catch the full recording on the Myseum Facebook page. We're gonna shift now to Martha, who will be telling us more about the migrant rights network campaign for full immigration status for all. Migrant stories are an important part of this migrant rights network campaign, Martha. Can you tell us more about this call for the full immigration status for all?

- Thank you Jo. I just want to, before we go into this, I just want to clarify to people that the leadership, the human rights leadership training program is an eight week, eight full Sundays that is provided for free by CCESO. It has so many aspects to it, so story telling is one, but we have a lot of role play, PowerPoint presentations, all kinds of other arts. I think it is a popular education type of doing that training. I think it's something that is very participatory. I just wanna make sure that people understand. I think it has been mentioned a lot, and obviously story telling is a great part of it, but

there are so many other things. Yes, the whole, we had a big campaign last Sunday, and Cecil is part of the organization, national organization called Migrant Rights Network. Emma organized a massive Canada wide digital and social media gathering of migrants, poor and working class people, and allies, to demand full immigration status for all. The global COVID-19 pandemic has proven that migrants are essential to our communities, but are exploited and excluded. Land status has always been called by care workers, and here are the demands that Emma has actually put out in that digital seminar. After that seminar, people were asked to call the prime minister, so I think that whole day, the prime minister probably had massive phone calls from so many people from all over Canada. But Emma in support of that opening up the economy must include giving immediate, unconditional and indefinite permanent resident status to all migrants, irrespective of present immigration status. All future migrant workers must be able to immigrate to Canada, and be permanent residents immediately. Healthcare for all, no exception. You see there are so many provinces in Canada where healthcare is still not provided, especially to people who are foreign temporary workers. Economic relief for the people. That is so important, and again this came out more during the COVID-19 and until this time. Worker protections is another demand that Emma is asking for, and I think we have seen in the news that because workers, migrants were not protected, now have two deaths from the farm workers, who were Mexican migrant workers. There are so many who are now hospitalized, who have gotten COVID-19, because they were not provided appropriate protection when they came in. Support during quarantine. Again these are all, I think we don't have to go through this, I think details, because this has been very much in the media over the course of this last few months. End detentions and deportations. You probably heard of all kinds of deportations that's happening, even before COVID-19, there were women that had been deported, but they're being taken from shelters. I think this has to stop. Let migrants and their family in. Families are so important in providing support to migrant workers, and if they have that support, they don't need a system, the health system to really get anymore service, because the support is available if the families are around. But care workers have their own demand, in this particular event that happened last Sunday. The main demand, the specific demands of care workers is the permanent resident status for all migrant care workers in Canada, so they can assert their rights to live and safe work. Language and educational requirements must be removed, and work experience requirement reduced. I mentioned this over and over again, because I think that if they have proven that they have worked very well, they have been accepted, or their employers like them, and don't understand why they still have to prove their language, as well as other kind of requirements that is really not relevant. No more pilots, no more pathways. Migrant works are essential and permanent. Migrants who do the work must be valued, and permanent immigration status must be given now. Migrant workers and their families have suffered enough,

caused by long separation. Children grow up disengaged from their separate families, and parents, and would sometimes feel hate for being left behind. There must be family unity now. So as mentioned earlier, good enough to work, good enough to stay.

- Thank you Martha.

- I'm okay.

- Okay. Thank you Martha for sharing all of the points for the campaign and the demands, and I think it's really important for people to know what the demands are. Right now with the COVID-19 pandemic, and physical distancing measures, and global economic uncertainty, and all of this police and state violence, threatening indigenous and black lives, and along with other things, pressing issues that are happening right now. We wanted to ask Genie, who now works as Across Boundaries, an ethno-racial mental health center in Toronto, to share some community resource for those who may need support. So Genie, do you have anything, any resources for us?

- Yes, so right now, so if anybody who doesn't know about Across Boundaries, Across Boundaries is an anti-racism mental health center. We provide services to individual who are experiencing mental health and addiction. It is equitable, holistic mental health justice. It's not only clinical approach, we have holistic mental health. We have different programs during the day, but right now due to physical distancing, we don't have onsite programs. Right now we have virtual programs. We have different programs that you can find in our website, that would be mindfulness, recycle projects, yoga, arts and crafts, get up and move, current events, creative expressions, ESL. These are our virtual programs right now. We have also case management, and of course addition support with the CBT, Community Behavioral Therapy. Right now our services are virtual services. If you would like to call us, please call us at 416-787-3007, and you can ask for intake. You can see our website, you can visit our website at www.acrossboundaries.ca. Thank you.

- Thank you. Thank you Genie. We're posting the links in the chat window.

- Thank you Genie for sharing about Across Boundaries programs, and how their framework has always addressed anti-black racism, and also being inclusive of the LGBTQ community. There are links in the chat, if you want more information.

- Yes, I was supposed to mention, yeah sorry--

- It's okay, yeah.

- About support.

- [Jo] No worries.

- Thank you, thank you.

- No worries. Thank you everybody. We've come to the end of our program. We opened in a good way, so we'd like to close in a good way. Martha would like to read a poem by Joven Obrero. The poem is entitled "Did You Meet With The Women Today?"

- Yes thank you. It's quite a long poem, but I will only read a couple. The first and the last. So did you meet with the women today? Did you wash their open sores, and throbbing veins, as they spoke of the terrible frontiers they have to across and the wanton masters they have to serve, so their children could live the life away from the land of waste and hunger. Did you meet the women today? Did they sing a song for you? Did they dance? Did they give you wisdom, joy and grace? Was it a happy event? Or did they cry their sorrows onto your lap? Did they embrace you into their fold and sang a song of love and freedom? Did you meet the women today? Thank you.

- Thank you Martha. Thank you everybody for joining us for Care Work Stories, digital edition. Again thanks for Mahlikah, Martha, Genie, Karen and Cecil for sharing their stories. Your knowledge and taking your time on a Sunday to be with us. And thanks everybody who was able to join us online, on Zoom and on the Facebook live.

- Big thanks to everyone at Myseum of Toronto for all their support. There's so many people behind the scenes helping us go smoothly, so thank you to each and every one of them. We also want to let you know the discussion is available on Facebook live, in case you wanna watch the whole thing, or share with folks anywhere in the world. We just want to give a heartfelt thanks on the Indigenous People's Day to all our ancestors who are in spirit world. Some of the leaders whom we've talked about in our talk today are with us in our hearts, if not in a physical way, but we continue and honor their legacy. And for our honored guests, thank you so much for sharing your stories, and contributing to this history in the making.

- Thank you everybody. Remember to stay safe and keep fighting for justice. Thanks