

WORKING CONDITIONS IN HONG KONG AS A DOMESTIC WORKER

Gina is forty-nine years old and has four children. During her lifetime, she spent eighteen years abroad as a maid, including thirteen as a single mother.

She lived eleven years in Hong Kong and her last salary was five hundred and sixty American dollars a month.

The Hong Kong law allows employers to ask the domestic worker to perform tasks up to sixteen hours a day, six days a week. Every Sunday, she is entitled to a twelve-hour break, from eight to eight o'clock. She must respect the curfew and can never sleep outside the employer's home, by law. She is entitled to two weeks of vacation to return home every two years.

In the absence of an employer, the Hong Kong law allows migrant domestic workers (MDW) to have a temporary permit of only two weeks to find a new job. This delay is very short, imposing great pressure on these women not to leave their jobs. As a consequence, complying with the demands of the employer is very difficult. In addition, the commissions to the employment agencies can represent several months of salary, which is very expensive for the servants.

Her main employer:

For almost 8 years, she was hired by a family of two elderly people and their single daughter, who acted as her boss. This woman was very hard with her, because of her refusal to give her the sexual favors she wanted to get from her! She constantly invaded her private life. For example, commenting on choices in underwear or just on clothing. She refused him access to the apartment's internet network, which forced her to buy network time on the phone in order to talk to his children. She was not allowed to calls when she was working. Before leaving for her first vacation, her boss took her to the doctor and once there, she insisted that she get an injection of estrogen as a means of contraception, which obviously causes strong side effects, such as headaches and dizziness and ruined more often than not her two weeks of vacation she had been waiting for four years to see her children ...

She was paid monthly three thousand seven hundred and ten HK dollars or five hundred US dollars. Her boss also asked her to clean every week the apartments of her two sisters, each with two children, to do their respective laundry, to iron their clothes and sometimes to cook for them, which is not included in his contract at all, at the time of hiring. The employer paid her a monthly supplement of five hundred HK \$ or sixty US dollars. Often at night, the old man rang the bell twice or three times to accompany him to the bathroom. She was often exhausted by all the work and by a sleep often shortened.

She went to the market every day to buy food. Obviously, she was not allowed to eat expensive foods such as chocolate, seafood, ice cream, cookies and desserts that are more expensive. She was never invited to eat in the dining room. She was alone in the kitchen.

Christian, she believes the story of Jesus Christ and although Christmas is one of the most important days for her, her boss never allowed her to go to midnight mass!

After Sunday morning mass, she normally used her free time at the city park. Bottles of cold water in a large bag and ice cream that she sold on the spot, in addition to a manicure kit offering her services to visitors to the park, allowed her to have some extra income. She usually returned at twenty-two, after a long day at the park and a small meal in a restaurant. On the fall of two thousand-sixteen, after more than seven years and ten months of hard work for this ungrateful employer, she was fired. One Sunday morning, before taking his day off, his boss told her to pack her bags and not to return. The reason, she claimed, was two hours after the curfew violated her contract. The fact is that the employer seemed to have discovered that she was looking for another job with better working conditions.

Back in the Philippines for a short time, she had to re-do all the medical tests required by the agency in order to qualify for a new job. On this November, she returns to Hong Kong to work for a family of four. One of the young children sleeps permanently in his room. Despite the hard work with a young child and a newborn, she appreciated the last employer who showed her gratitude and respect.