

**Domestic workers**

Dieser Vorschlag bezieht sich auf Zadie Smith: The Embassy of Cambodia.

**Aufgaben**

Der vorliegende Vorschlag enthält in Aufgabe 3 alternative Arbeitsanweisungen.

- 1 Outline Lyn's experiences as a domestic worker in London and how the Voice of Domestic Workers offers help to people like her. (Material)  
(30 BE)

- 2 Compare Lyn's experiences to those of Fatou in the short novel "The Embassy of Cambodia".  
(40 BE)

- 3 Choose one of the following tasks:

- 3.1 "Human rights are not a privilege conferred by government. They are every human being's entitlement by virtue of his humanity."  
(Mother Teresa, missionary and Nobel Peace Prize winner)

Taking the quote as a starting point, evaluate how well human rights of migrant workers are respected, referring to material dealt with in class.

**or**

- 3.2 Since 1 January 2021, the UK has operated a points-based immigration system which aims to reduce migration by limiting the possibilities for low-skilled migrants to take on temporary work and by giving priority to applicants with high-level skills and talents. According to a report published by the House of Lords in 2021, the government hopes to "attract people who can contribute to the UK's economy" with this policy.

You are doing a summer internship at the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, a UK charity that promotes the benefits of immigration. Write an article for the organisation's website, assessing whether the aims of the new UK immigration system fit the image of Great Britain as an open multicultural society.

(30 BE)

## Material

**Katherine Hearst: ‘Like I’m in a cage’: Domestic workers trapped and abused in lockdown London (2020)**

Crouched in the corner of a claustrophobic room, intermittently stifling her tears with a towel, Lyn whispers over a video call.

“I feel like I’m in a cage,” the Filipino domestic worker tells Middle East Eye.<sup>1</sup>

Lyn is a live-in carer for an elderly man who for the past three months has forbidden her from leaving the flat, even to take the lift down to the reception.

She is one of many domestic workers working for Gulf Arab families currently residing in locked-down London, where coronavirus fears and preventative measures have exacerbated<sup>2</sup> already draconian<sup>3</sup> and often abusive situations.

Already excluded from many labour protections and subjected to overwork, delayed or withheld wages, and in some cases mental and physical abuse, lockdown has sharpened these conditions, and further exposed this already vulnerable workforce.

Kalayaan, a London-based campaign group for migrant domestic workers, told MEE it has received reports from a number of workers who have been dismissed from jobs and with no entitlement to support, left destitute, or been forced to work increased hours or face losing their income or accommodation.

That’s a threat that Lyn feels particularly.

“I have to listen to him because I might lose my job. It’s very hard for me to find a new job, especially in this pandemic situation. At least here, they give me food,” she tells Middle East Eye.

To distract herself, Lyn watches buses pass by, and, as lockdown eases for others, listens to the inviting sounds of revellers in a nearby park. Working in private households, Lyn has been forced to the peripheries of public life. Now, bound to her room, she has practically disappeared into obscurity. Despite the intimate nature of her job and near-constant hours, Lyn’s work is badly remunerated. She works 20 hours a day in six-day weeks, earning just £450 (\$565) a week.

Restricted to the four rooms of the flat, Lyn hasn’t just lost her liberty but her salary. She hasn’t been paid since lockdown began on 23 March.

When she asked for her wages, her employer pretended not to hear her. “Maybe he thinks I don’t need it because I can’t go out,” she says. [...]

Lyn managed to escape her previous employer after she sought help from a parent when picking up one of the family’s children from school. The woman reported her to the police who told her to apply for the NRM<sup>4</sup> and put her in touch with a migrant domestic worker support group, Voice of Domestic Workers, who helped her escape.

Lyn was free from her employer, but faced an uncertain future. [...]

Marissa Begonia, founder of Voice of Domestic Workers (VDW), receives a minimum of five to 10 calls for help a month. She coordinates rescues of domestic workers, using her own home as a safe house.

“Communication is the biggest problem,” she tells MEE. The women often don’t have UK SIM cards, they manage to contact the group via patchy Wifi.

“Usually we meet them in parks to give them the SIM cards, or even plant them in the bin, then we wait outside their house to collect them.”

<sup>1</sup> Middle East Eye (MEE) – a London-based online news outlet covering events in the Middle East

<sup>2</sup> exacerbated – made worse, intensified

<sup>3</sup> draconian – very hard, very strict

<sup>4</sup> NRM – The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking and ensuring they receive the appropriate protection and support.

- 40 Lockdown has ground this operation to a halt. Marissa was contacted by a woman who was being beaten daily by her employer, but says “we couldn’t rescue them in person, so we tried to arrange for a taxi and a hotel to quarantine them, but we lost communication with them”.  
The isolation and income loss brought by lockdown is compounded by hostile environment policies that have left many migrant domestic workers destitute with no recourse to public funds. [...]
- 45 Covid-19 has forced a re-evaluation of what constitutes essential work, it has unveiled the invisible, often unpaid work of care performed by migrant women that keeps the lights on<sup>5</sup>.  
Despite this public reckoning, domestic workers still lack visibility. They are not recognised as “key workers” and are excluded from government support schemes during the pandemic.  
With the pandemic, undocumented domestic workers are facing a “double tragedy” as they cannot
- 50 access healthcare, Marissa says.  
“Many of them have fallen ill with Covid... I was trying to encourage one of our members who was suffering from asthma to go to A and E [emergency room], I couldn’t convince her, she was too scared she’d be deported,” she says. [...]
- 55 Through her tears, Lyn speaks with pride about how the group has helped her rebuild her confidence through counselling, English and IT classes, now conducted via Zoom through lockdown.  
“I know now I’m not stupid, and I’m not crazy... I’m getting back my dignity,” she says.  
“When I go back to the Philippines I want to share what I have learnt, that we are not just workers, we are human beings.”

(787 Wörter)

Katherine Hearst: ‘Like I’m in a cage’: Domestic workers trapped and abused in lockdown London, in: Middle East Eye, 14.06.2020, URL: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uk-coronavirus-saudi-uae-qatar-domestic-workers-kafala> (abgerufen am 15.12.2021).

---

<sup>5</sup> to keep the lights on – *here*: to enable people to continue living a relatively normal life