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VISUALIZING FILIPINO-CANADIAN FAMILIES’ LIVES IN TRANSITION

On March 13th a photo exhibit illustrating the experiences of familial separation and reunification of Filipino families who came to Canada under the auspices of the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) will take place at the University of Ottawa. Family members can come to Canada and re-join LCP workers after they complete the Program. The exhibit will be accompanied by a presentation and community discussion.

Each year thousands of women and some men, predominantly from the Philippines enter Canada as part of the LCP. “Mary” is a former LCP worker whose photos are among those being exhibited. Like other live-in caregivers, she was eligible to apply for permanent residency status and to bring her immediate family to Canada after she fulfilled the Program’s requirements, working for two years within a 36-month\(^1\) period after her arrival in Canada. Mary worked full-time while living in her employers’ home for 24 months. She shared: “Bringing my family to Canada is a dream come true, I told myself, ‘I have finally fulfilled my commitment to bring my family to live in Canada’”

The exhibit also features photos by a group of Filipino youth who are children or siblings of former live-in caregivers and who had been separated from their family members from between four to 18 years. One commented, “After years of separation, we had grown apart and become strangers to each other. We experienced tension in our own families. In some cases, we even felt resentment.”

The goal of the photo-exhibit is to increase awareness of the issues facing transnational Filipino families in Canada who have been engaged with the LCP, and to generate policy ideas to improve the Live-in Caregiver Program. The event is being organized by Dr. Denise Spitzer, Canada Research Chair in Gender, Migration and Health (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ottawa) as part of the release of findings from a recently completed three-year study on Filipino family reunification in Canada. The photo-exhibit highlights the importance of the community-university partnership model, through which the study was done, as well as Dr. Spitzer’s innovative research approach.

The photo-exhibit will run from 4:30 to 8:00 p.m. Taken exclusively by Mary and the youth themselves, the photos empowered participants to communicate their stories directly without the intervening,

\(^1\) LCP workers are now granted 48 months to complete their obligations under the Program.
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interpretive voice of researchers. Each photo is mounted individually and captioned with a title/description chosen by the participants. A formal presentation, interactive discussion and reception will take place from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. Local leaders and community research partners as well as University of Ottawa representatives will contribute to the discussion. The photo-exhibit will be held at newly inaugurated Faculty of Social Sciences Building, Hall 4007, 120 University Pvt., University of Ottawa.

About Dr. Denise Spitzer:
Dr. Spitzer has been conducting research with current and former LCP workers for over a decade. Most recently, she completed a three-year Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)-funded study (2009-2011) with community partners in Ottawa and Edmonton, entitled, *Transnational Families in Transition: Filipino Families Canadian Issues*. While highlighting the experiences of family reunification of former live-in caregivers and their families in Canada, the project focused on the families’ socioeconomic, familial and health status, educational attainment, labour market participation, congruence with their expectations of life in Canada, and perceptions of integration into Canadian society. Dr. Spitzer is also an Associate Professor in the Institute of Women’s Studies and a Principal Scientist in the Institute of Population Health. She has worked extensively with migrant, immigrant and refugee populations on issues pertaining to the intersections of health, migration and gender in Canada and in Southeast Asia. [http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/fem/professor-profile?id=87](http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/fem/professor-profile?id=87).

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