

Pei-Chia Lan.

Global Cinderellas: Migrant Domestic Workers and Newly Rich Employers in Taiwan.

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Pei-Chia Lan's *Global Cinderellas* is a welcome addition to an emerging line of research on the global movement of migrant labour. While her primary focus is on the experiences of 58 Filipina and 35 Indonesian domestic workers, and 51 of their Taiwanese employers, her research has wider implications for our understanding of the global forces of gendered and racial exploitation. Dr. Lan outlines how various transformations of the middle class Taiwanese family have led not only to the increased use of domestic labour, but has contributed to the global exploitation of labour. As the Taiwanese middle class becomes more immersed in paid work, the need for domestic carers for their young children and aging parents has increased. While the working and living conditions of Filipina and Indonesian domestic workers in Taiwan has improved in the past decade, the women's experience of exploitation has taken on new and varied forms. For instance, many aspects of the lives of migrant domestic workers are highly regimented. Some Taiwanese employers refuse to allow their employees to have their own living quarters, requiring them to sleep on pull-out sofas in the family living room instead. Others are not permitted to leave their employers' homes unescorted, lest they make connections with other domestics whose employers grant them greater freedoms. One fear among the employers is that the domestic workers will unionize and demand better working conditions and higher pay.

There are also familial dimensions to consider in the global trade of domestic labour. In Taiwan, domestic labourers clean houses, provide child care, and provide assistance for the elderly. These tasks were traditionally carried out by the female household heads. In the new Taiwan economy, middle class women are no longer able to maintain these functions as they are increasingly required to work for pay. Because of the need for domestic support, anxiety and apprehension are frequent elements within many Taiwanese homes upon the entry of "strangers". The main source of tension, according to Lan, is the presence of racialized female "Others". Some employers feel that the Taiwanese culture is threatened, believing that the values of the Indonesian and Filipina domestic workers are inadvertently passed on to their employers' children. Still others suspect that elderly Taiwanese are mistreated by some domestic workers. These tensions and suspicions are mainly based on race, but there are gendered aspects as well. For instance, many female employers take on a motherly role towards their Filipina or Indonesian employees. Employers may give domestic workers unwanted advice about how to raise their own children who live overseas. Others give their domestics cast-off and used clothing, believing the employee should appreciate these "gifts" rather than finding them insulting. In short, there seems to be a disconnection in the expectations of the Taiwanese employers and their Filipina and Indonesian employees.

Yet many Taiwanese employers praise their domestic labourers not only for their work, but for their companionship. Some feel a close kinship with their Indonesian and Filipina employees, though this relationship can degenerate, causing friction among family members. Lan's analysis explores these varied sites of cooperation and contestation in the relationships between the Taiwanese employers and their domestic worker employees. She also examines the effect that international work has on the Indonesian and Filipino children of domestic workers, who are left behind when their mother accepts work abroad. Her examination also highlights the tactics used by some domestic workers to circumvent their employers' rules, giving these women some agency in their limited free time away

from work. This multi-layered approach makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of the global labour market and its affect on families both in the host and sending countries. Lan's analysis of the gender and racial components of this system is invaluable.

Even the best books have flaws. I outline one troubling aspect here. The text is rather light in the application of theory. For example, her application of Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Analysis to the careers of domestic labourers in the front stage and the limited free time they enjoy outside the homes of their employers in the back stage is brief and incomplete. She could have engaged in this theory more thoroughly to better highlight the intersections of employee and employer relations in several contexts. To achieve this, she could have integrated her discussion of the front stage and back stages to the gendered, racial and global aspects of international labour. This would have augmented her argument about the influence of race and gender on domestic labour and would have strengthened her use of the front and back stages. Her somewhat superficial application of other theories is evident elsewhere in the book. However, this problem is easily overcome in the classroom if the instructor emphasizes how sociological theories can illuminate the marginal and precarious situations faced by domestic workers.

Notwithstanding this problem, this book is a tremendously valuable teaching tool. In fact, I thoroughly enjoyed this intriguing and timely book. Dr. Lan eloquently weaves the stories of domestic workers and their employers in an extremely engaging style. Students will find it one of the more memorable texts of their university studies. I would highly recommend it for use in upper year sociology, anthropology, labour studies, and gender studies courses that examine global labour movements, globalization and exploitation. Furthermore, while its focus is on the experience in Taiwan, this book can be easily applied to Canadian context in helping students understand the international movement of labour.

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