

Quote/Unquote

"When asked where I come from, I tend to hesitate in responding. I do not know where I am from nor do I think I am alone in this situation. I was born in Lebanon, grew up in Switzerland, and pursued my college education in the United States. ... Like many of you, each day I find myself enticed by a mosaic of opinions, cultures, religions and people. I am at home everywhere and nowhere. I am never a stranger, yet I never quite belong. Today, I am still rummaging for answers on how to create a stronger base for my precarious situation perched in between two radically different cultures. I belong to a culture that has no name. I do not belong in Lebanon, nor do I belong in the United States, and the need to belong is of no urgent importance for me. However, what is important is the knowledge that I will not be ostracized in Lebanon for the person I have come to be: an individual, a feminist, someone with an opinion rather than what I am supposed to be thinking and believing." (Lina Alameddine, *Al-Raida* No. 79, Fall 1997 p. 5-6)

"When I was a child, I lived in Nablus for a couple of years. There, people always regarded me as a foreigner. I tried my best to be accepted as an Arab girl, but very often. I was spoken to in English, even if I talked to people in Arabic. My friends frequently accused me of not being able to understand their culture and what the Palestinians have been through because I was not a "real" Arab. It seemed to me they had created an intimate circle in which they could talk freely. A silent wall was built between themselves, the Arabs, and me, the "outsider". There was a general kind of mistrust toward my mother, my siblings, and me. Once, my parents wanted to choose a new school for my sister and me and when we went to look at the new school, many kids started insulting us, calling us Jews and apostates, and saying we would burn in hell." (Mona Katawi, *Al-Raida* No. 101-102 Spring/Summer, 2003, p. 77)

"As someone who grew up in Lebanon, I have always felt that Beirut was my home. When I came to the US, I felt very much like an outsider. And yet as a researcher, returning to the region as an adult, I have come to realize that I am still very much an outsider in the Middle East. Because of my childhood experience, I am neither a total outsider nor a total insider in either part of the

world." (Jennifer Olmsted, *Al-Raida* No. 90-91, p.41.)

"There are two forms of human rights violations in Lebanon, which have become part of the normative practices in the employment of foreign domestic workers. These are, first the withholding of passports and other identity papers by the employer; and second, the restriction of movement. Justification for both types of restrictions are based upon the following arguments: Practices such as the withholding of passports are seen as justified because both the recruitment agencies and the sponsors/employers have an up-front financial stake in the employment process. Therefore, the agency requires some assurances, because within the first three months the agency is liable for her replacement. It is partly for this reason that many agents now stipulate that restrictions like the withholding of passports and the refusal to leave the house are required as conditions of the guarantee. From the employer's perspective the withholding of the passport and restrictions are to safeguard this 'investment' at least until the contract period has expired, or sufficient labour has been served to work off the money expended. Even the withholding of payment of wages is practiced supposedly for the same reasons. In other words, there exists a type of debt bondage here in addition to the kind of "contract slavery". There is a lot of support for this argument not only from employers and agencies, but even from priests and nuns who assist domestic workers in need, and from some embassies.

The second argument is that all the types of physical restrictions are required to insure against the employee 'getting into trouble' by meeting others whom may use her to enter the house for theft, becoming pregnant or getting diseases. She also might meet others who will tell her to leave because she can make more money in other ways (implying prostitution, or freelance domestic work). If taken seriously, these justifications concern personal protection and fears of added complications, which the employer simply does not want to have to deal with. The last matter concerns the labour market and the employer does not want competition or poaching of the employee who may be attracted by other arrangements." (Ray Jureidini, *Women Migrant Workers in Lebanon*, International Labor Office.)