

DOMESTIC WORKERS UNITED

Interview afc2015027_03481_ms02

Marie Pierre Noel interviewed by Marie Ketlain

English translation of interview conducted in Haitian Kreyòl. For transcription of Kreyòl original, see afc2015027_03481_ms03.

English Translation

00:00 - 00:44

Marie Ketlaine (K): Okay, my name is Marie Caitlen (sp?) and I am interviewing Marie Pierre Noel. Non, Pierre Louis (sp?) (*unclear*) - (*name unclear*) (*laughter*) Today is 8/30/2016.

(*silence*)

(*voices in the background*)

(*laughter*)

Today is August 30th 2016 (*laughter*)...Okay.

00:44 - 01:14

Marie Ketlaine Antoine (A): What is your name?

Marie Pierre Noel (N): My name is Marie Pierre Noel.

A: Okay. What work do you do now?

N: Right now, I take care of people who are elderly and disabled.

A: Mhm. Where were you born?

N: Haiti...

A: Where...

N: Port-au-Prince.

A: Okay...

N: Port-au-Prince proper...

A: Where do you live now?

N: I live in Queens, Springfield.

A: How did you come to find the work that you do now?

01:14 - 01:46

N: A friend looked for me.

A: How long have you been at this job?

N: Six months.

A: Okay. How many homes do you work in?

N: I work in 4 homes.

A: Mhm. Can you tell me about your day and the responsibilities that you have in that home?

01:46 - 02:12

N: In one home or all the ones that I'm...?

A: In the one where you are now.

N: The one that I'm in now I work for 5 hours...

A: Mhm.

N: ...in it. I work with someone who is 65 years old who suffered from a stroke and he no longer has control of one side of his/her body. What do I do for him/her? I cook food, I wash him/her, and then spend the rest of the time with him/her and then I leave.

02:12 - 02:47

A: Okay. What qualities do you need in order to do this kind of work?

N: It is work that demands a lot of patience, a lot of love in order to do it and a lot of awareness. You must see that person as a human being. We know how we enter this world but we don't know how we're going to leave it. He/She (*unclear*) is like a parent to you. You have to treat them well so that they feel like they are still human beings that can do everything on their own, even while you are helping them out, without diminishing their humanity, which bringing them down with what you do for them and what you say to them.

02:47 - 03:13

A: What kind of training do you need in order to this work?

N: The kind of training you need for this work demands professionalism. Since I had

already learned this in my country, it helps me do my job. And like I told you, you need to have a lot of love to do it

A: What specialty do you need in order to do this kind of work?

03:13 - 03:33

N: You would need a something regarding physiotherapy because there are movements that you have to make with the patient. There is a certain and a method to do it to help him/her get into the bathtub to bathe him/her and to help him/her get out, and you have to sit him/her down to sleep.

03:33 - 04:05

A: Okay. I know that you used to babysit too. When you're watching a child, what's the best way to get them to sleep?

N: I've never watched a small child so I don't have that experience. I always babysit adults who are almost like children because you reach a certain age in your life when you revert back to being a child. This asks almost the same thing of you because sometimes they don't want to eat, you have to change their diaper, you have to sing for him/her, you have to spend some time with them so that you can learn how to take care of them.

04:05 - 04:34

A: Okay. What's the best thing that you can do for a child who is crying and needs to go to sleep?

N: Eh, they have to be clean. They must be clean. After that, they can't be hungry. You have to caress them and make them feel that they can trust you to receive the affection that they need to fall asleep.

A: For example, you are watching a child. This child doesn't want to eat. What's the best way to get that child to eat?

04:34 - 05:04

N: There are many reasons why the child doesn't want to eat. Maybe what he/she is eating isn't what they really want to eat.

A: Mhm.

N: If it is a child that cannot speak, you have to find out what his/her taste is like, to know what he/she likes. And if that is what he/she like, and they just don't want to eat it in the moment, eh...you can play with him/her, make them walk, make them run, make them sit, put a little toy in front of him/her so that they can laugh and while they laugh, you can put the food in their mouth so that they can eat well and not vomit later.

05:04 - 05:32

A: Okay.

N: But there are several ways.

A: For example, for a child who is teething? Do you ever use tea leaves to give the child?

N: In my country, yes, with my own children but here, I never do it. But if I were babysitting a child here, I don't think that I would take that chance to give them anything like that.

A: Okay. For example, if you were using tea leaves, which leaves would you use for a child in that case?

05:32 - 06:04

N: Eh...there is the chyendan leaf. There is...I don't remember their names... (*name unclear*) which is a refreshing tea to give to the child. You can give them soursop tea, rinse their heads off, put a bit of alcohol (liquor) on it. But these are the ways of home which, as I've already told you, I'm familiar with the leaves and the role that they play. It is 100% natural. But a child that I am watching, that I am not their guardian, I wouldn't take this chance to give someone else's child something like that, even if I know that it would be good for them.

06:04 - 06:34

A: Is there something that you can teach your boss?

N: Eh, yes. There are a lot of things that you can teach your boss because you are the one in contact with their child emotionally, physically, morally, and you contribute to the education of the child. Because the child's parents are not there for them. That's what they're paying you for, to replace them...you know the child better than the parents do. Then you can show them things like how to make them fall asleep on a day off, a day that you don't come to work, and how to feed them...

06:34 - 7:07

...and other ways to better deal with the child while they are without (*unclear*) when you leave the job that will (*unclear*).

A: What do you like the most about the work?

N: (*laughter*) When they pay me (*laughter*); when they are paying me.

A: I don't have to ask you any more about that. (*laughter*). Okay. What is the hardest part of the job for you?

7:07 - 07:34

N: There are a bunch of things that are hard. I can list them. Like how I said before, I don't have any experience with children but I can claim the way that the parents of the people that you are taking care of treat you as an employer, your boss. That's very important.

A: Can you give me an example?

07:34 - 07:58

N: Eh, the money is one thing but the way that they talk to you and take advantage of the time that you work and the things that you have to do. People (*unclear*) give me things to do that I won't do. I would rather leave instead. That's just me, that's just me (*laughter*), that's it, it's the kind of contact that I make and I'll do more than what they ask me to do because I need to do it, but not because they make me do it or because you've done some injustice to me.

07:58 - 08:27

A: Okay. What kind of relationship do you have with the people that you work with or with your boss?

N: The people that I work with are usually more connected than I am with him/her, since like I've already told you I don't work with children, the child is a little easier to deal with depending on the child and his/her character. So, they'll always get along better with them whether times are good or bad like...

08:27 - 08:52

N: ...his/her disposition, be it a child that is misbehaving, because you know you can't really discipline them by hitting them like you really should... but there are at least some principles that you can give him/her, so that they can do what is good for them. And for the elderly too, when they are agitated, there is a certain way you should treat them.

A: Okay. What way or how do you manage your emotions toward these people?

N: The ones that are sick?

A: Mhm.

08:52 - 09:23

N: Eh...Just like how I told you, I base everything that I do on respect. I know that the sick person is a human being/person. When a person is getting older and they are physically normal and they come to have some shock and be it age that knocks them down, and they are sick at the same time, there are moments they know that a person is helping them do things. Especially if it was someone who was very active, they don't want you to help them in that moment. Instead of saying that they don't want you

to help them, they'll just make some gesture. I understand it. I might leave them for a moment, ask them what they would like for me to do for them in that moment...

09:23 - 09:53

...but when the parent is your boss, I can't deal with them the same way. Because...

A: How do you manage your emotions with your boss?

N: My example was not good. If the boss stings me, I sting back. That's just how I am.

A: Okay.

N: I don't insult them. I've yet to take a workshop on insulting (*laughter*).

A: Do you think they respect your pay, your work hours, or your vacation days?

09:53 - 10:24

N: Eh, that, about that, there are two aspects. The first aspect depends on the job that you're doing. One style of work, it's a little difficult to discuss vacation days. How? Because in that moment, I might need a day to do something of my own because I work from Monday to Friday. I don't work Saturday, Sunday. But, if during the week, like today, I wanted to come here, I already knew I would be coming here, I told my boss...

10:24 - 10:54

...and my patient that I would be absent today. I have something that I have to go take care of. Just like, if he/she wants me to work on the weekend, he/she has to tell me in advance and must pay me for it. Now, what happens in my case, is that they always pay me my days off the same price as the regular days that I work.

A: Okay. Have they ever exploited you or anyone that you might know or that is working because of some immigration case?

10:54 - 11:27

N: Yes, while I've been here, the first job that I had the people were very rich. In my opinion, they didn't pay me badly. But, when I came to find out the price that they were paying someone who didn't have any immigration issues, in my mind, they were paying me badly. Okay? And they always wanted me to do so much more than what they asked me to do.

A: But you don't know anyone else, like a friend, or someone in your circle, that's working where they are being mistreated because of their immigration status?

11:27 - 11:54

N: Yes, they mistreat them because of their immigration status and it depends on the

person. For example, in my job, I experience something else. The patient's child treats me well. His/her child is very humane and respects people. But the patient himself/herself assails me. His/her morale is good. He/she is aware of what they're doing, knows in advance what they're doing to me.

A: Okay.

N: Do you understand?

A: Have you ever shared your culture with the people that you work for or with other people?

11:54 - 12:24

N: I do that everyday.

A: Okay. How do you balance your life or your personal life or your work time, or how do you balance it?

N: Just like I told you, I take Saturday and Sunday for myself.

A: Mhm.

N: I go to church on Saturday. I always need a day so I take Sunday. Even up to this day, I've never had a problem with that. So, if I need the day, I just know that I won't make any money that day and I, I...

12:24 - 12:52

...when I look for a job, I always look for a work time that is good for me. Like, I go to school in the mornings now. I just look for work in the afternoons.

A: Okay.

N: I don't know how I will manage that in the future though...

A: Are you part of or are you a member of any organization or other group?

N: Eh, I'm not part of any other organization. I came here for the first time and I am really happy when I came, to share ideas and learn about other good ideas.

12:52 - 13:26

A: When you are working in a house, do you feel like you are part of a group or a community?

N: It is part of a community. When, in my experience with work, I am always by myself

with the patient in the house. So, it's always me and them. Understand? So, the little experience of mine is delicate. More often, they eat out but I just take what he/she eats and put it in, in, in...

13:26 - 13:58

N: ...I've yet to work with multiple people in a house, never.

A: Okay.

N: It's always just me and the patient.

A: How did you come to be part of the Domestic Workers organization?

N: I was invited by Ketlaine Antoine who is the person interviewing me, who invited me last week. I was very happy to be invited.

A: (*laughter*) What does it mean to you, um, the work that Domestic Workers did on the work law?

13:58 - 14:28

N: Eh, that...what? Can you restate the question?

A: What does that represent for you or what does it mean to you the work that Domestic Workers did with the law having to do with working people...?

N: Oh, it's very good not just for me but for people who are already working and for people who will become part of it because there is a type of exploitation that happens where not everyone knows how to defend themselves, not everyone can do that, who would like to lose their job, because they have bill obligations, parental obligations and when...

14:28 - 15:00

N: ...a person has immigration issues they can't go to an agency. Even the agencies too, they will mistreat people.

A: Mhm.

N: So, when you don't pass, you have both immigration issues, the person knows, and an agency problem, you will have to work with someone directly and they will mistreat you a lot. They have a tendency to not pay you, they have a tendency to do worse... there are some people who suffer sexual abuse. Some people don't get paid in advance. Now, Haitians, everyone...

15:00 - 15:30

N: ... no matter who they are, has the right to defend themselves wherever they are. Now, when you have a point of reference...what's the name? What's it called? What's the thing called?

A: Um, Haitian Women...

N: Yea, Haitian Women...

A: Haitian Women...

N: Haitian Women...

A: Haitian Women...

N: Haitian Women, know their rights and their duties. When I find a place where I can meet with women from home, to claim what I need and that can give me some advice, like how to act, yes, it's good.

15:30 - 15:58

A: What would you like...

N: You must not exploit it...

A: What, what would you like for Domestic Workers to do in the future or how has it affected your work, the law that Domestic Workers passed?

N: What what?

A: How did that affect your work, the law that Domestic Workers passed, how did it affect you?

15:58 - 16:26 N: It has affected me in a positive way.

A: Okay.

N: From what I was able to get, like the ideas that I heard. I hope to come back to another training that (*unclear*) what I have and other people. And now, when you're working, you're sure of yourself. You know your rights, where it starts. You know your duty and where it ends. Where they are not able to take advantage of you. And you must work for the money you're earning in a professional and aware way.

16:26 - 16:56

A: What would you like Domestic Workers do for you in the future?

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N: Eh, what I would like (*laughter*) is to work on the immigration issue, especially the question of you must get married in order to get your papers (*laughter*). I can't digest that. And I think this is something that can lead to another debate, another time, um, meeting because it could lead to another failure in someone's life...

16:56 - 17:26

N: ...I would like them to work on that. And, since this is the first time I've heard of it, I won't say it's been here for long. There are a lot of other experiences that more people can come to have.

A: Okay.

N: It would be very good especially for someone who has just come. Because even at home, according to your surroundings and where you're from, they can take advantage of you too. So, if you've just come and you can find a place like this to come, it would be good. So, I see that they are doing good work.

A: Okay. Are you happy with the impact of the law?

17:26 - 17:57

N: Oh, yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

A: What would you like the politicians or those people who work on laws to know?

N: All that we've said here, so that they can elaborate on it, so that they can sit down with people to work on it. But not just for the moment but always, for the entire future.

A: What would you like to learn in regard to your education?

N: For the moment, business is what interests me. I would like to have a big store (*laughter*).

17:57 - 18:28

A: What kinds of lessons have you learned or what has Domestic Workers taught you?

N: Okay, I just learned about it today, but I feel that it teaches the women a lot of things and I believe it taught me a lot of things, too. (*laughter*).

A: (*laughter*) What last words would you like to add or what would you like to Domestic Workers to know?

N: To always know our pain, our problems as women. Because the problem doesn't stop at work only. The problem is in married life, the problem is in family life, the problem is in the streets. There is a lot of work that needs to be done...

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18:28 - 18:57

...not just in the workplace. I am a strong woman. I don't take on every problem that a person gives me, understand? And not all women are like me, understand? I am used to working with my head. You have to make women more independent. While they are doing this work, there is something else that they can do too. I don't know if it already does this, but teach them to have a career. Those who lack education, help them rise up. So that tomorrow they can be even more strong women on the sidewalks.

A: Okay. Thank you.

(applause)