

And yet we live. On May 30th migrant women break the isolation

We have worked in the fields and in the logistic industry; we are workers in the mechanical sector; we clean houses and big malls; we serve food in big chains; we take care of the sick and the eldest. That's how our youth has been spent. They denied our asylum application or some of us are waiting in reception centers without any precaution to protect our health.

For us, life before corona-virus was as hard as it is now. We have been facing isolation for a while. We have fought for our freedom when we left our countries. We face everyday poverty imposed by laws as 'Bossi-Fini' and 'Salvini'. We have invented our own ways to survive here, to renovate our documents, to be independent, and to get over everyday racism. We have faced our employers, those who exploit us with contracts that are often much worse than illegal work, with work rates always imposed on us with threats. We're being exploited together with our migrant brothers. But we're not equal, neither at home or on the job.

We must face racism as well as the oppression we experience as women. On the job, we invent ways to struggle against those who believe that we have no 'authority' to respond to oppression; that we are low skilled; that we are weak and so they can blackmail us; that we are unstable because we get angry. Our knowledge and our intelligence are always hidden and devalued by our employers. If our choice was free, this world would turn upside-down. We know that our freedom frightens those who want that things remain as they are. We say that if things must change, then we must change many things.

We arrive at the workplace after we've already worked many hours for our families. We come back home and we still have work to do. Shouldn't we be angry? We are going to be angry until things won't change. We raised our daughters and our sons, we fight for their education and their future, and they have to wait until they're 18 in order to be called 'citizens'. For us, closed nurseries and schools, online teaching, and quarantine, means to be unable to go to work, to pay the bills, to buy tablets and school material, to help our children doing homework, while we work in the warehouses with insane working-hours. We must even worry about those who'll tell us that we are not good mothers, that we are not doing enough for our children. We must face the threat that they'll take our children because we are poor and because we work too much. When we apply for citizenship they check our income, and they say that it's too low. Is it our fault? But still we manage,, we live, even if we are not citizens, even if we are not ok. The truth is that things are not all right, salaries are the problem, and citizenship is the problem.

Our daughters and our sons can speak Italian, but even if they were born here, they are not citizens. At school, they call them 'brown kids' and they don't play with them. Our daughters face male violence inside and outside our houses, as we do. We are talking about domestic violence, and about violence at work . We are talking about violent husbands, fathers, bosses and employers that we fear to denounce because of the residence permit and family reunification. We only have our strength and our desire of freedom against this violence.

During this pandemic we have carried on working, without any safety for our life, we have been made redundant and those of us who were working as caregivers have even lost a roof over their head. During this pandemic we have been ill with Covid and we have been left alone. We are used to laugh at difficulties because we do not like to be afraid. We laugh at the little aid they granted us, because it's ridiculous. The baby-sitter bonus, the cleaners' bonus, the redundancy fund, are barely enough to survive. As for this limited and temporary regularization, for which it is essential our poverty and our

exploitation. And yet we live. We pay our residency permits with our salaries and our sweat, while in our workplaces we have to struggle three times harder than our colleagues do. We struggle for ourselves, for our children and our colleagues too. We struggle against our employers, against racists and sexists. We struggle for our lives, our autonomy and our freedom, especially when the government and the unions try to ignore us.

They say that ‘the struggle pays’, but for us, at the same time, ‘we pay the struggle’. We are punished if we revolt. They move us to worse job-units, to more difficult and dangerous tasks. We are women, we are good at fighting two-times harder in order to get what we want. We come from different places. The color of our skin is a problem for everybody except that for us. We fight one next to the other. We come from Moldavia, Russia, Africa, South America, Pakistan, Kurdistan, Turkey, and Tunisia. But for us, we are women and migrants that during those years have kept on fighting in order to get everything: documents, a job, an house, a life without male violence, and freedom for our children. This pandemic is threatening our everyday struggle. However, we respond that we will struggle even harder, we will struggle all together.

On May 30th, we will take the streets again to say that we want everything: we want an unconditioned European residency permit, without any condition based on income, employment and family status. We want citizenship, freedom and future for our children; we want independence for our daughters. We want our employers, those who exploit and threaten us, to pay for everything. Those who despise us for the color of our skin; those who think that they can cheat us because sometimes we can’t speak Italian as we would like to do; those who think that since we are women then we are docile and we do not react. This day of struggle is a reminder: we will not shut up! We want that those who blackmail us with our documents will pay. They told us that we are ‘essential’ for this country, but we’re here because our lives are not essential for anybody except that for ourselves, and for those who struggle together with us. We are here to live. We will not accept anything less.

Women’s Assembly of Migrants Coordination