



“My name is Creuza Oliveira and I am the president of the National Federation of Domestic Workers in Brazil. Besides this position and my involvement in the union movement, I have been an activist of the Black Movement in Brazil since the 1980s, in particular in the organization “Unified Black Movement”. I am also part of the Women’s Movement and work constantly for the improvement of my own community. I began to work as an activist in 1983, when I participated in the creation of the Group of Domestic Workers in the State of Bahia, which in 1986 became the Professional Association of Domestic Workers in Bahia and, after 1990, became a full fledged Union. I was President of this Union from 1990 to 2001. In 2002, I was elected President of the National Federation of Domestic Workers and subsequently re elected in 2006. Due to my activism, I have been actively participating in forums of Government accountability. I am at the board of the National Council for Defence of the Rights of Women (2002 2007) and the National Council for the Promotion of Racial Equality (2003 2007).

How did I get here? I was born in a family of poor rural workers who did not have an opportunity to go to school, therefore I only started to attend a literacy course when I was 16. I lost my parents very early, before I was 12. Because of poverty, I started to work as a domestic worker when I was 10. and living a full life, as every child sh

In the home where I lived I had many tasks, including taking care of the children. Besides, I did housekeeping, laundry and other domestic work. If I broke an object, I would suffer physical

punishment and psychological violence, often with racist and moral slurs such as: “nigger”, “monkey” and “lazy”. These

in the household where I worked, who insisted regularly with practices that we nowadays consider as sexual abuse against children and teenagers.

Besides domestic and sexual violence I spent this period of my life suffering what I would call patrimonial violence, as I only started to receive a salary as a domestic worker when I was 21. Until that age, my payment used to be used clothes and food. I did not have a right to vacations or other basic rights of any worker.

When I was 14 years old, I was taken by a family to work in Sao Paulo, in the Southeast region of Brazil. I did not have any right, any money, nor did I know the city in which I was going to live in. I was taken as if I did not have a family, without any authorization from my remaining relatives in Bahia. I was a person without citizenship.

Only when I was 28 did I discover that there was a nascent movement of domestic workers in the fight for their rights. I found out, through a radio broadcast, about meetings that were taking place in a school. From that moment, I started to m

fight for their rights

The reason for this is that domestic work in my country still carries the legacy of slavery: lack of application of relevant laws, physical and moral violence; lack of equity vis à vis recognized rights for other professions; lack of equity in terms of union rights; etc.

Out of the number of domestic workers, 494,000 are children and teenagers between 5 and 17 years of age. They undertake, as I did when I was 10, all kinds of domestic tasks, often without any compensation. In other words, they work as slaves.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on my participation in the Durban Conference in 2001, particularly in the VOICES event. That was a very special moment for me. I heard many difficult stories, learning about problems which I believed only existed in my country. I learned that racism is a global problem. The fight against it cannot be local, it needs to be global. When I returned to Brazil, I transmitted the message of VOICES in various events which I attended, in order to sensitize people that we could not stand by the situation. We needed to take the fight against racism to the international level.

After VOICES, I became much more mature. I also believe that there were important changes in my country, particularly with the election of a new popular Government. Many public policies changed since 2001. Federal departments for the promotion

~~16/11/11~~

relations. The Brazilian State is an institution that still allows for racist and sexist practices.

I am referring, for example, to the press and media outlets that still contribute for the perpetuation of racism in Brazil. I am referring to propaganda that makes non white persons and women in particular more vulnerable to situations of inferiority, submission and violence. I am referring to songs that diminish women and encourage violence. I am referring to TV shows that portray domestic workers as that