



GRACE PADAO

60 years old, caregiver, community worker
from Bohol, Philippines
living in the US since 2001

"The Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights Gives us Power!"

"As a Filipino community worker, I commit to work towards a more progressive membership base. I hope that more Filipinos in America, especially those who are undocumented, would become aware of our rights."

Grace Padao considers herself as practical, helpful, friendly and pro-people. She inherited these values from her father who was a government employee and her mother an elementary teacher in the Philippines. Through her perseverance as a working student, she was able to not only finish her studies, but also support her siblings for them to earn their degrees as well. She got married to an engineer, with whom she had three children - all girls. *"At the age of 18, I already was able to support my sisters while I was working for the government. I was able to finish my studies. All my sisters also finished their schooling. Because of my stable job at that time."*

Life became difficult when her father died at a young age, and since then, their family business which was their main source of income suffered financial losses. In 2001, she decided to come to the United States to visit some friends. Realizing a better life in the US, she supported her children's dreams to become nurses so that they also could come and work here. In 2004, Grace and her family finally moved to the US as immigrants in pursuit of better economic opportunities. *"Yes I first came here as a tourist. I was not sure about the job situation. I just came to the States to see the realities here. What America is all about. What can be great for the future of my children. What would be best for them. After that, I saw how America could bring a great future for our children. We tried to become permanent here in 2004. We were able to bring our children here."*

In the US, Grace worked as a caregiver. She worked so hard, while enduring the challenges, for the sake of her children. She was paid only 80\$ a day, which was below the minimum wage. She also was not afforded her days off. Aside from caregiving, she was also entrusted to do other household chores. *"Being a caregiver is a very challenging job. It requires a lot of patience. It was also difficult to deal with different cultures, and with different values of employers, and employees, or people that you are giving care for. But, in order for me to support all my children, I have to work hard here in America and endure all the difficulties."*

She was encouraged to assert her rights as a caregiver when she joined the campaign for the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights. *"Right now, there is already power given to the caregivers. We*



already have the bill approved. We are strong enough to file a complaint in case of violations. I hope that this bill will help a lot of caregivers."

She feels committed to do what she can in order to make sure that the provisions of this law are enforced. "We need to have meetings. We need to communicate to all caregivers. We need to inform them about this law. We have our Filipino community. We have our office. I hope that all the members - caregivers, nannies, housekeepers - are aware of this bill. So that we can go forward with this. And we could help one another. Our Filipino values tell us we need to be helping one another."

Full story:

<https://www.afirechicago.org/single-post/2017/05/29/Oral-History-Series-Grace-Padao>