

BOOK LAUNCH: Rhacel Salazar Parreñas **Unfree: Migrant Domestic Work in Arab States**

A discussion with the author and commentators Praveena Kodoth & Vani Saraswathi

WHEN: Friday November 12th, 4-5pm GMT

WHERE: via [Teams](#); email annalisa.fagan@kcl.ac.uk



A stirring account of the experiences of migrant domestic workers, and what freedom, abuse, and power mean within a vast contract labor system. In the United Arab Emirates, there is an employment sponsorship system known as the kafala. Migrant domestic workers within it must solely work for their employer, secure their approval to leave the country, and obtain their consent to terminate a job.

In *Unfree*, Rhacel Salazar Parreñas examines the labor of women from the Philippines, who represent the largest domestic workforce in the country. She challenges prevailing ideas about the kafala, arguing that its reduction to human trafficking is, at best, unproductive, and at worst damaging to genuine efforts to regulate this system that impacts tens of millions of domestic workers across the globe.

Rhacel Salazar Parreñas is Everline Professor of Sociology at the University of Southern California. She writes about labor and migration from the Philippines. Her areas of research include labor, gender, international migration, the family and economic sociology. An author of numerous articles and books, her seminal works include the monographs *Servants of Globalization: Migration and Domestic Work*, *Illicit Flirtations: Labor, Migration and Sex Trafficking in Tokyo*, and *Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes*. She is the co-editor of the Stanford University Press Book Series on Globalization in Everyday Life.

Praveena Kodoth is located at the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, Kerala where she teaches a course on gender and development. Her recent research has examined the nexus between policy, socio-economic practices and identity in shaping the spatial contours of women's overseas migration from India as well as the labour market prospects of women workers in destinations. She is currently involved in two studies on migration, one to identify the barriers that child migrants in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala face in accessing public provisions related to nutrition, health and education. The second, a study of a Kerala village that seeks to understand the immediate effects of the COVID 19 pandemic on overseas employment and the long term effects of overseas migration on the village economy.

Vani Saraswathi is the Editor-at-Large and Director of Projects, Migrant-Rights.org and the author of *Stories of Origin: The Invisible Lives of Migrants in the Gulf*. The book is an anthology of reporting from seven origin countries over a period of three years. Vani moved to Qatar in 1999, working with several local and regional publications, and launching some of Qatar's leading periodicals during her 17-year stint there.

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