

Shireen Ally

University of Witwatersrand

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*'Maid' with Rights: The Contradictory Citizenship of Domestic Workers in Post-Apartheid South Africa*

Black women domestic workers were an iconic category of apartheid's racial order. Widely regarded as amongst the most marginalized and exploited women of the working class, domestic workers labored, in particular, under a political system of tenuous citizenship which prescribed a despotic labor regime of migrancy. Democratization in the 1990s formally dismantled apartheid by deracializing citizenship, and for black domestic workers, this brought the extension of citizenship-rights. The post-apartheid state prioritized the plight of domestic workers, crafting an impressive and extensive array of new legal technologies to formalise, modernize, and professionalize paid domestic work (including a 'world-first' inclusion into the Unemployment Insurance Fund, and a 'world-first' national certificate in domestic work). Not only does this represent probably one of the most extensive efforts of state protection for domestic workers in the world today, it also establishes South Africa as unique, in providing within single life histories, experiences of the shift from migrant to non-migrant, and non-citizen to citizen status.

While the recent literature on transnational migrant domestic work has argued that limited citizenship generates an additional axis of inequality defining the compromised location of domestic workers, the paper draws on extensive life histories to explore the effects of inclusive citizenship and extended state protections for South African domestic workers. It argues that, not unlike the "partial citizenship" subject position theorized by Parreñas, domestic workers in South Africa experience their political inclusion through the subject position of 'contradictory citizenship.'

In this "contradictory citizenship," workers have benefited from greater regulation and access to state institutions, which have mitigated some of the now infamous forms of racialized exploitation to which they were subject under apartheid. But, at the same time, the new legislative mechanisms induced new forms of state power over workers. Workers were therefore reticent about the state's initiatives, aware of the extent to which the conferral and claiming of rights remained strictly proscribed by the continuing and interlocking hierarchies of race, class, and gender.

The paper therefore examines the meanings and modalities of political inclusion for domestic workers in South Africa, and in so doing, suggests the tensions between the aspirations of citizenship-rights, on the one hand, and their accomplishments, on the other.