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| Speak Up 15 December 2015  Migrants in the rebuild | |
| Male | This programme was first broadcast on Canterbury’s community access radio station Plains FM 96.9 and was made with the assistance of New Zealand on Air. |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana,  E ngā reo,  E ngā hau e whā  Tēnā koutou katoa  Nau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”.    Join the New Zealand Human Rights Commission as it engages in conversations around diversity in our country. Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions... May you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.  Welcome to this edition of “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. I am your host Sally Carlton from the Human Rights Commission in Christchurch. We’re going to be talking today about migrants in the rebuild - and that’s the Canterbury rebuild of course - and this is in aid of International Migrants Day coming up on the 18th of December. We’ve got today Lana Hart and Delia Richards in the studio, if you guys would like to introduce yourselves please. |
| Lana | Kia ora, I’m Lana Hart, I’m the skilled migrant business advisor at the Canterbury Employers Chamber of Commission so my job is to work with businesses that employ larger number of migrants. |
| Sally | And when you say larger numbers how many is that? |
| Lana | Well I mean we do work with small and medium companies but a lot of the larger construction and trades companies are employing upwards of 10, 20, sometimes up to 70 Filipinos and migrants from around the world so a huge range of companies but they tend to be larger numbers if they are related to the rebuild. |
| Delia | I’m Delia Richards and I am the Filipino Liaison Manager, I used to be the officer because of the growing population of the Filipinos I’ve been elevated into one step higher so we manage now our own area. What do we do there? We welcome all migrants but mostly the Filipinos who would go to our office and we listen to them, give them the steps and the ways of settling well and integrating into the society of Christchurch. |
| Sally | Great thanks Delia, do you have a sense of just how many Filipino migrants there are in Christchurch? |
| Delia | This is actually not a fixed figure because before… I know, Lana, you would say it would be 3,000 and I also got it from another source but lately the Filipino Consulate Mobile Services Scheme to Christchurch and they have the renewal of this passports and our office at the Christchurch Migrant Centre and I was surprised that Consulate General Arlene Gonzales-Macaisa said that it has reached to 5,000. |
| Lana | Those are the numbers that I would agree with, around 5,000 now. I mean a lot of those numbers are really hard to get a clean number from because of the ambiguity of how they came, whether or not they brought children, whether or not their partners are there, what type of work visa they’re on but I think in general we’d agree around 5,000 in wider Canterbury; so, not Christchurch. |
| Delia | Oh right so it’s the wider area, yes but some of these are already who have settled in Christchurch are being sent to Auckland so again, we cannot be sure if they are also counted as one of those who are living in Christchurch. So it’s not really fixed and it keeps on changing. |
| Sally | When you say they’re being sent to Auckland, is that by their employers? |
| Delia | By their employers, by the company because of lack of contract, lack of work and there are some migrants, migrant workers who would refuse to go to Auckland because they like Christchurch, they’ve settled here for two years already and going to another place would start from A again. |
| Sally | So I guess this is quite an interesting point, does the employer bring the worker in for a particular job? This is what I thought… a particular job based in Christchurch or in Canterbury, or does the employer bring somebody in just as an employee with the right to move them wherever? |
| Lana | It depends a little bit on the work visa type and most of the changes in the Canterbury Immigration Policy environment have really opened up the ability for businesses to move their people around so that’s sort of a more open work visa, although a lot of skilled migrants aren’t taking Immigration New Zealand up on the offer of opening up their visa. So it’s not tied directly with one company; they now have the ability to do that. Previously you would have to come… Say we’re talking about the Philippines at the moment, you would have to come attached to an organisation for a fixed period of time, your employment agreement would mirror that fixed period of work visa time. If you wanted to move you would have to go back to INZ [Immigration New Zealand], the employer would and say look we want to move this worker up to Auckland because of a commercial need and it’s reasonably easy to do it, it’s a variation on the condition of your work visa but there’s a fee associated with it and then they could relocate them. But of course the migrant has to agree to that, so it really is about the relationship between the business and the migrant about whether or not they want to move. |
| Delia | And they consider the cost of living in Auckland is different from here in Christchurch so there are many factors that these workers would think before they agree to the employer or to the manager. But I would say that these Filipinos - when they stay together, they stick together, so removing one or two of them and move to another place would be… Should we say, add to the loneliness as well because of the bond that they have, it’s becoming stronger. They go to work together, they speak the same language, they eat the same food and they go back to their house and they share their stories and information so it’s really a big part that this Filipinos stay together, that’s keeping them safe and letting them know that they’re all welcome as a group and not as an individual; they get lost if you treat them as an individual. Not to the sense that they don’t do anything anymore or they are discouraged or being alone but the thing is they need someone beside them and that will take years because number one problem would be the communication. When you’re in a group, you have that strength and you have that power and you are encouraged to speak out - but if you are just alone and you have some barriers that would block the communication skills then they become weak or they tend to look for someone who could do it for them. |
| Sally | Interesting. I guess if we’re going to be talking about migrants maybe we should think about what is a migrant and I guess what is a migrant in comparison to say immigrant or a refugee as well might be another thing to clear up for people. |
| Lana | My view is that an immigrant and a migrant is exactly the same thing, we’ve just shortened that word. I think what is a more interesting question is around the connotations of those things so clearly the refugees come under a certain government scheme, they have been declared official refugees - either quota or non-quota - through the UNHCR system so they clearly have a certain status which is that they part of a refugee system. Then they come here as generally vulnerable persons that are entitled then to citizenship and the rights and benefits of New Zealand citizens, which is different from migrants. The majority of the people that come to live in New Zealand are migrants and I’m one of them, Delia is one of them. It doesn’t matter how long you’ve been here… Yup, Sally is one of them.  You just have people from all over the world choosing to make New Zealand their home and there’s a choice there and refugees do not have that choice about where they go and the fact that they have left their home country, so there’s some significant differences between the two groups. But within that whole sort of ‘migrant’ term, I think it’s a heavily loaded term and some recent research that we did from the Chamber around what residents think about migrants underlined the fact that there’s a huge range of stories and narratives around what we mean by ‘migrant’ and the programme that I work with, Immigration New Zealand-funded programme to support businesses works with skilled migrants. So they’re coming with skills that we need for our labour market and the Filipino workforce is a key part of that because we need construction and trades and aged care and dairy workers now to fill our labour market. |
| Delia | And students as well. |
| Lana | And students. So migrants are… You know there’s a huge range of definitions around it and what’s muddying the waters at the moment is the European situation because it’s a highly controversial movement of people from Syria and other countries into Europe. A lot of push back and negativity politically around that. And then of course, the sheer scale of it is like, what are you going to do with all those large numbers of people? And the problem in Syria and Europe is that so many of those migrants are very skilled, they’re highly skilled and they’re coming out of a political need, militaristic need to get out and they’re coming to live in countries which probably don’t acknowledge that level of skill. I mean Germany originally said that yes we want Syrian refugees and migrants to come in because they are highly skilled. And we’re going to see that diasporas spreading around the world now.  But a lot of them aren’t, a lot of them don’t come with the language and skill level that you need for an effective settlement in a western country, so I think there’s lots of shades of grey around the ‘migrant’ term. A lot of people have negative connotations because they’re vulnerable, they don’t come with skills, they don’t come with perceived benefits for that country in the short term - and so it sort of taints the word ‘migrant’ as being a liability rather than an asset to that country which is a real shame because most migrants are assets to the new country that they call their home. I think that in general a lot of research on migration shows that people who leave their countries to start a life in another country are generally highly motivated, generally reasonably skilled and are a certain type of person that are keen on making a new life especially for their children overseas. Generally migrants are very effective and successful people. |
| Delia | Yes my understanding of a migrant would be someone who would move from their mother or home country and then transfer or move, travel across the ocean to another country and they embrace the country this time. Now this would be, I would say, the brave people who would be ready to face challenges in terms of food, in terms of weather, in terms of the language and in terms of the way of living. Now on the other side, a refugee would be one who is subjected to the political issue of a country, it could be religious movement or any contradicting issues and they are forced to go to this country and I reiterate what Lana said, they have no choice. There are even times that they don’t hold their passports and when they go to… This is my understanding, that when they go to the next country or their assigned country they stay together in a camp and before they are allowed to mingle or go and live in the community and I know for one because we have that in Auckland as well. There are many things that they have to consider when they accept a refugee coming from a country, a receiving country, but for a migrant there is no problem at all. But the thing is, when it comes to assistance, the refugees would get more assistance than a migrant. A migrant would depend on their families, their friends and by way of mouth before they go to this country of destination everything is set for them like this is where you stay, this is where your family would be or the relatives are here; but the refugees it’s a big question mark. |
| Sally | I think what we might do is continue this conversation around migrants arriving in a new country after the break. And to get us thinking about immigrants/migrants and different categorisations here’s ‘Immigration Song’ by Led Zeppelin. |
|  | **MUSIC BY LED ZEPPELIN – IMMIGRATION SONG** |
| Sally | Nau mai haere ma ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. We’re talking about migrants in the rebuild with Lana Hart and Delia Richards and we left off thinking what is a migrant, and I’d like to move to think about when a migrant arrives in New Zealand what/if/any legal or any other systems are there in place to help a migrant settle? And I think again this is very different to a refugee who has a lot of support systems when they arrive - not for a long time - but when they arrive. Are similar systems in place for migrants? |
| Lana | So Immigration New Zealand - which was the vehicle that got them here because each and every migrant needs to be legally in our country - has a lot of settlement information that a migrant can access when they first arrive. So everyone who gets their work visa approved, or any visa to come and live here, has a letter that comes to them and it links them to all these different websites and other services that Immigration New Zealand provides and I have to say they’re really good. Many of our skilled migrants are very tech savvy, their English language is very good, they can get it translated into other languages if they need to. So there’s a whole lot of online information that migrants are encouraged to look at before they come so that we don’t get into situations where there’s not a place to live or you’re not sure where your kids are going to school or what to do if there’s an illness. I mean, that is very much available to them. The information side of things is really well covered and really that’s changed significantly in the last five years because everything is online and really most migrants are coming very tech savvy and with devices. So we’re not talking about refugees, we’re not talking about highly vulnerable people; we’re talking about the majority of migrants that come to live and work in New Zealand and they are coming with good information and access to good information and that’s pretty much across the board. That wasn’t the case ten years ago because it was about hard copy stuff that we needed to distribute. So that’s really good news.  Most of them are going to be - if we can talk about just Canterbury now, so not across New Zealand - most of them are going to be employed and that is really important because that means that the employer has awarded the work visa, they wouldn’t be here were it not for that job. And the employer has a role now in helping them settle so they can be quickly productive. And that is going pretty well; most employers do a pretty good job of helping getting from the airport, helping them with accommodation, helping settle their children if they come with them, getting information about what to do on the weekends, what the climate is like, when the festivals are, driving, all of the things you need to know when you’re setting up life in a new country. And so that’s good news as well.  What can be bad news is when the new migrant loses their job, and this can happen in the Filipino market for a variety of reasons, or they come and it just doesn’t quite work out the way they expected it to and we often hear stories of the family not settling, the wife is really finding it a lonely job, the children might not really find life in their new country as they expected it to and when the family doesn’t settle the skilled migrant can often be the one who is the principal applicant from a visa perspective that decides just to pack it in and go home. We lose about 25% of our migrants that way, and we lose a large number by going to Australia where the wages are higher. So we have two tensions, returning home because they haven’t settled or there’s been some problems in the wider family or that they’ve gone to a country where they can earn higher wages because New Zealand doesn’t have that as part of its menu of things that it can provide, we don’t have high wages here comparable to other western countries. |
| Delia | At the Christchurch Migrants Centre we welcome all those Filipinos in particular who would come and share their issues and concerns. What we do with these issues and concerns: number one is we organise or we have established this advisors group wherein all the essential needs, essential priorities for these migrants are met. This group is composed of advisors, managers and employers as well who would meet three times a year and talk directly to these employers so issues like accommodation would come out. Lana is one of them and she would always be very, very informative in terms of solving problems. We also have the health system by Wayne Reid and he would tell us what the issues are, what the policies are, what their rights are. We also have Immigration Department, Immigration New Zealand, and we have other employers who would broadcast in the meeting that this is what we need and this is what you should do and other needs, essential needs. We also have the community group leaders who would say if you are feeling lonely come and join our company, come and join our organisation and we also have the list of the places wherein they could worship on Sundays and they can go to any of these religious beliefs or denominations that they carry with them, that they brought with them to Christchurch.  We also have activities, physical activities, to help them realise that working in New Zealand is not all physical actions and you have to show your strength and agility, we also do the physical in a more relaxed way as in basketball and we have other activities as well. Like we let them join the national competition, this is once a year during Labour Weekend, when they can engage in volleyball, basketball, soccer or they have billiard, table tennis, ten pin bowling and other activities. And in fact we are going to be the host here in Christchurch in the year 2017 and the migrants are so excited because this is their way of contributing back to the Filipinos and contributing back to the migrants in answer to the Immigration Policy 1.3.4 meaning that they can integrate, they can associate with the New Zealand activities and at the same time holding onto their cultural values; So we try to welcome all of them and we encourage them to talk to the officials, to the police, for them to know that this is a safe place and a welcoming place. |
| Lana | I just want to add to that: that is one of the challenges of the Filipino workforce integrating, is that their notion of authority is very different from what we’re used to in New Zealand. In general, we have an egalitarian society where people are regarded as equal no matter where they come from, no matter what their position or title or agency is. And in the Philippines it isn’t that way, they’ve quite a hierarchical society where people know their place, they respect authority, your status is extremely important and people use that as a way of organising society – neither is better than the other but when Filipinos come here there’s a fear or an insecurity about working with our wonderful police system, our justice system, the health care system because these are agents of authority in their countries. And so what Delia is doing is trying to cross that boundary between getting people from Immigration New Zealand who have stamped their visa to be here, who have a profound influence on their lives and their family’s lives and to be able to speak face to face with the manager of that service is quite something for a Filipino worker and Delia has been instrumental in helping Filipino’s know that generally New Zealand authority are safe, are friendly and are non-corrupt. |
| Sally | I’m getting a real sense that… Delia you are, at the Migrants Centre and in the Filipino support groups that NGOs, doing great things. Lana you mentioned employers helping migrants settle in, their children settle in schools, these sorts of things; is this an obligation that employers have or is that something that individual employers can choose to initiate? |
| Lana | Absolutely, it’s voluntary but it makes good business sense. And I think that Canterbury employers - and that’s the core group that I work with - got a good taste of this after the quakes. They started doing things that we didn’t ask businesses to do before, they started thinking about food parcels or temporary accommodation, they started thinking about the mental health of their staff and they started providing services well beyond their call of duty and their obligations legally as a business. And so when it came time for mass migration - and that has been what it’s been like in our region - we went from having a few hundred Filipinos coming into the region each year to several thousand, and it happened very quickly over a short spans of time. So when we ask businesses to start doing things like thinking about accommodation, thinking about picking them up at the airport, thinking about communicating differently or training your staff to work better across cultures it wasn’t as big of a deal were it not for those quakes and the aftermath of the quakes. So I think Canterbury employers in general have done a good job of voluntarily offering up services which at the end of the day is about having well-settled, productive staff and about going a little bit further at making sure that whether they’re from the Philippines or the UK, from Germany or from South Africa, that they know that it’s not about just taking on a Canterbury employee, it’s actually different. You need to do other things to ensure that that worker can get up to speed as quickly as possible. A lot of them have done a great job and that’s the group that I work with is the ones that do a good job. |
| Delia | And in terms of getting to know these Filipinos, there are some companies in the past, I would say, who came to our office to ask for advice to get the characterises and trades of the Filipinos and their values and their work ethics so they become… When you understand the employee, they become productive and it’s best that they work without fear and too much authority would not make them free to work and express or display their skills. So I guess these managers are trying to establish a relaxed atmosphere for them to be able to be productive and use all the skills to the maximum and one thing about these Filipinos, they talk, they have feelings, they can communicate now if they are not happy they don’t go to… As you said about authority, they don’t go straight to the manager, they talk among themselves first. I would say they are collective, they think collectively, because they share this passion to work - that’s why they are here for - but when there’s something that could make them unhappy and I would say unhappy would mean a lot of things including accommodation, including the time, including the tools that they use and number one would be the language, communication so they talk among themselves and then they come as a group.  As I’ve said before, coming into a group would give them the strength and they would have a louder voice to announce what they want to tell and what information they would like to relate to the managers. But because some of our Filipinos have these communication skills they are able to express this now. So in a group they have a leader who is good in expressing even just simple English and you have to consider that these traders who came here… I would say not most of them, but a few, would have no diploma or no academic training because most of these painters and builders got their skills through observation from a father or from a grandfather who used to be a builder and they carry on that skill and as we said again this also includes the farmers. Like the issues that we had lately, it’s happening in the Philippines now because of our education system and because of the population, the overflowing population we have in the Philippines, the social system is not able to absorb all these needs of these Filipinos. But this time we are so happy and we are glad that even without the diplomas, even without the university diploma you have accepted these skilled workers and this is what we are thankful for. New Zealand opened its doors to us in despite of all the trainings but New Zealand is also aiming to farther this training while they are here in service and that’s another thing that we are thankful for. |
| Sally | Sorry to interrupt you Delia but we might need to take a break now. \Lana we’ve got your song – ‘In Colour’ by Shapeshifter. Was there a particular reason you chose this song? |
| Lana | I love the video and Google the video if you can and its people from all over the world having a boogie to their song and it is just that wonderful expression of how we’re connected around the world no matter which country we are from through music. |
| Sally | Fantastic, here we go then, Shapeshifter. |
|  | **MUSIC BY SHAPESHIFTER – IN COLOUR** |
| Sally | Welcome back to “Speak Up” – “Korerotia” here on Plains FM 96.9. You’re with Sally Carlton for the Human Rights Commission radio show and we’re speaking with Lana Hart and Delia Richards about migrants in the rebuild. I just wanted to touch very briefly on this issue of exploitation. We’ve been hearing about it coming through in the media a lot - it’s obviously only one part of the migrant story and particularly the Filipino migrant story - so if we could just touch on that and the changes that have taken places in the legislation since these stories have started surfacing. |
| Lana | Well exploitation of particularly Filipino workers has been a Government priority and concern for a couple of years and it should be, I mean it isn’t good enough that people come and live and work in this country usually leaving in the Filipino context their families behind to make the sacrifice of coming and living and working here and then it all goes wrong. And it isn’t just that person where it goes wrong without accommodation, without a lawful work visa, without the money they need to survive here, it’s the family that they’ve left behind that suffers as well. So it can be an enormous problem, which is why the Government prioritised some of this work and really has been working with the Philippines Government at trying to get better communication, more transparency and more information sharing going between governments.  They’ve kind of encapsulated this in a Memorandum of Agreement between the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency and the New Zealand Government about how they’re going to share information. So for example, the Labour Inspectorate here can do an audit - and they are - on employers of migrants and if there’s problems they can give that information back to what is basically another jurisdiction and let the POEA know. Now the POEA has enormous powers, don’t they Delia, to stop people from leaving the country, to regulate the agencies that outsource that labour, to deploy people or not, or even to stop them from ever, every leaving that country again. They have enormous powers of there and now this agreement is basically saying the New Zealand Government can let the POEA know, the POEA can let the New Zealand Government know where there’s a problem with the agent that’s deploying that person. This is going to be a game changer because suddenly these two jurisdictions that pretty much said, look we can’t influence anything in the Philippines because it’s their business or the Philippines saying look, we can’t do anything about the way that New Zealand employers are treating these people; that’s all changed. They’ve got clear lines of communication and they’ve got a regular meeting to monitor and regulate this so I really am pleased about this big change. It’s been signed by both Governments a couple of months ago and in early part of next year it’ll be discussed about the mechanisms for rolling this out in these two countries. What do you think, Delia? |
| Delia | Yes I’m glad you mentioned about the pipeline, you know, POEA and New Zealand Immigration and yes there are some cases but a few of them would be coming from the victims themselves. Now, when we say exploitation it’s not only the exploitation issues that’s happening here, it could happen from their country of destination and because their dream, it’s everyone’s dream to go overseas, to send remittances back to their family for better living, for education and for clothing and for them to dream that I have set foot in another developed country is something to the Filipinos and they just grab this opportunity. They would solve these things in any way they could just to go overseas, but then when they arrive here that’s where reality hits, what can they do? They have these policies, Philippine policy and New Zealand policy so where do they go? They go to their managers but then they have contracts, contracts done and signed in the Philippines which could also mean duplicated or changed contract here in New Zealand so it’s quite complicated. And this issue will need legal advice and that’s what these Filipino workers are doing now and there was a time where in most information and most news that would come out or through radios and through TVs, through programmes would have concentrated and emphasised on the Filipino way of living here and how they are being treated. It was not positively accepted by the established migrants, like those who have resided and who are already citizens of New Zealand, because the social media would say Filipinos and that means all of us. That’s why the Philippines Community Support Services established this own group. Our aim was to solve the problems at the lowest level. We don’t want Filipinos and it’s not a happy feeling to hear that the Filipinos are suffering. Not all of them are suffering; there are happy, happy moments that they have shared with the managers, there are so generous managers and supervisors out there and these are not being broadcasted, these are not being mentioned. We just want people to just think that the Filipinos are here to work and they want to be happy and if ever there is an exploitation issue then we can solve it locally within their company. |
| Lana | There is a lot of Government energy behind solving it locally, that’s a very good point. And I wanted to pick up on another point, Delia, that you’ve made: the biggest story about the Filipino workforce in Christchurch is a good story, it’s the one about how not only are Filipinos doing well supporting their families back home, they’re immigrating their families to become a part of Christchurch.  But also the other side of the story is that it is changing Christchurch residents, it is changing who we are as a city. And there are many, many stories of as you say supervisors, co-workers, bosses, companies that have changed, have loved working with Filipinos, have lifted their game because the work ethic is so high, have enjoyed hearing about the songs and the sports and the values and the families that the Filipinos bring and they have absolutely enjoyed and changed for the better because of the influence of the Filipino workforce. Which is not a drop in the bucket, it’s actually a major part of our Canterbury rebuild workforce and our aged care and our dairy sectors as well. So it is mostly a good story, and from time to time we get it wrong and businesses either lose contracts, they don’t do a good job under their employment agreement, they have over-pitched what is going to happen here or perhaps been too optimistic about the work they can provide. The Filipino then doesn’t have a job and then it all starts to crumble, but mostly that story doesn’t occur. |
| Delia | Yes and the Filipinos help themselves, when somebody is out of a job it’s not working, what do you have there, who knows these and where can we go and that’s happening, we help each other, we think collectively and we also help collectively. |
| Sally | Lana I just wanted to pick up on your point about Christchurch is changing. What’s the future prediction… All these workers are coming in now, are they expected to stay? |
| Lana | It’s a $6 million question and we don’t have figures to support any of that, it’s too early, if you will. However, my hunch anecdotally is that 60% to 80% of temporary work visa holders will stay and the reason I say that is because that’s what I hear from businesses and the ones that do a good job have migration strategies to bring them in on a permanent basis. Most Filipinos want to stay once they get here and see the quality of life and the opportunities that we have for particularly children - so absolutely, they want to stay. Not all will be able to because of the labour force, Because the labour market drives our temporary migration strategies - so we’re not going to take people in as painters if we don’t need painters - but we are now at the peak of migration so for rebuild-related migration we’ve levelled off and we’re plateaued. Those high numbers will continue for a little bit longer and then it’ll start to drop off - but let’s be clear that ‘dropping off’ is significantly higher than anything we had before the quakes. Our numbers are very exaggerated at the moment, we’re still getting hundreds and hundreds of people coming into the country every week, every month from other parts of the world. The Philippines continues to be the number one migrant source country to Canterbury by three. Our next one down are historically our most popular migrant group from the UK and they are one-third of the numbers that the Philippines is bringing in - so that gives you a sense of how important the Filipino workforce is to the rebuild and to our societies and our neighbourhoods right now and that looks set to continue. But we are probably right around the highest numbers we will ever be right now unless something else happens. We can never foresee what’s going to happen next week. |
| Sally | It’s exciting though, the idea of a very, very culturally changing city. I guess this brings with it its own issues with the host population accepting these groups coming in and the Chamber’s actually initiated this “Smile” campaign. If you could maybe tell us the reasoning behind it. |
| Lana | Sure, when we’re working with businesses around supporting their migrant workforce and doing things a little bit differently so that they get it right and they can have a well settled productive workers, it became really clear that the people that make the biggest difference to that migrant are the Kiwis that they work with, are the Kiwis that they live with in their neighbours. When they’re standing at the school gate, it’s how they’re integrating and their children are integrating with the people that already live here. So we’ve started a campaign with a lot of other partner organisations about nudging Kiwi-born or people like myself that have been here for 20 years from other countries to go a little bit further at interacting more frequently, more meaningfully with the new residents to our city and this campaign is called “Start With a Smile.” It’s on billboards and flyers around the city; there’s a lot of social media activity. We actually have a really bright piece of smiley faced furniture - a smile couch with two helium balloons above it that looks like a smiley face - on which we hope to get Kiwi-born and foreign-born people to get talking and to get to know each other, to crack a conversation, to make Canterbury feel like home, for everyone no matter where you were born.  It is a region that’s changing so quickly. Auckland has had 59% of its residents have been born in New Zealand, in Canterbury it’s 80%. We have much more homogenous people that live here but in the last three or four years we have seen that change so quickly. The 2013 census doesn’t tell us that story yet because it is two-and-a-half years old now - but won’t it be interesting when we have our next census to see how many of us actually who live in Canterbury were born in Canterbury? It’s going to be a lot less and the rebuild has had very much to do with this.  The “Start With a Smile” campaign, then, is just about getting Kiwis to see that they too have a job of interacting, of starting conversations, of making migrants feel welcome. It’s not just about the migrant being a good migrant and settling. It’s about the Kiwis being good Kiwis and helping them to settle as quickly as possible. |
| Sally | Great and it’s time for another break. Delia, we’re listening to your song ‘Bayan ko’ (My Country) which is a Filipino song. If you could provide us just a little bit of information that would be great. |
| Delia | OK. ‘Bayan ko’ means My Country, my mother land, and this is where our heart would be. Every time you hear this song it will move you, all Filipinos will be moved to going back to the Philippines again, but then it is impossible for us to stay in our own country all the time so wherever we are in any parts of the world we have the symbol of the flag which would remind us of our country which is Bayan ko |
|  | **MUSIC – BAYAN KO (MY COUNTRY)** |
| Sally | Nau mai haere mai, welcome back to “Speak Up” – “Korerotia”, here on Plains FM 96.9. We’re speaking with Lana Hart and Delia Richards about migrants in the rebuild and I thought we’d start this next section of thinking about what are some of the difficulties that migrants face and not just Filipino but all migrants. |
| Lana | I guess the hardest thing about leaving the place where you’re from is the familiarity of your everyday life, and whether it’s communication - which is the number one complaint of migrants about Kiwis is the lack of ability to understand Kiwi accent and slang and colloquialism which are a huge part of our language - or whether it’s the foods or the smells or the vibrancy on the streets, it is hard to leave what is familiar to you to live in a foreign country. It takes years and years and years for that foreign country to feel like it is your home, but it does happen for most migrants that come to live here. So it isn’t easy but in the case of the Filipino workforce, which is a significant part of what we’re talking about today and as the key source country to residents in Christchurch, it’s about leaving their families. That is very different from other migrant groups who come with their families or haven’t yet formed their nuclear families so we have a lot of skilled migrants that come in the under-30 category, they’re on working holiday visa, they come here for two or three years to have a bit of fun, to do their OE, their overseas experience and then they go. And that’s great too, but really for that Filipino workforce which are the majority of our rebuild workforce, they haven’t brought their families. Delia would you like to tell us about that? |
| Delia | I would just want to magnify and perhaps elaborate what that song meant to us Filipinos. Now, to translate, our country is not rich but we have the nature there and it talks, the song mentions about the atmosphere, the birds, the nature, the flowers and the historical journey that we have gone through and those things have been embedded in our lives and that is one thing that we always look forward to. Now, as I’ve said, we are not a rich country but we are happy people, we were so happy to just look at each other and smile and that’s one thing we start with in relation to your smile programme Lana, that is how we are.  We do not go for, or we don’t aim for, elaborate expensive things. What will make us happy is the togetherness, it’s the love and the care of a family, we are a close-knitted family and we live… most of us would live in an extended house, extended family wherein you have the grandmother, grandfather and uncles and aunties and we also have a reason to celebrate just like the Maori people here. We have songs for all occasions, we have dances for all occasions and it is a must that we get together in small events like birthday, baptism, all the stages in life, first communion, graduation and that’s the thing we look forward to and we always prepare for the right kind of food to serve, the right dress to wear and also to contribute to the programme. In any celebration we always have singing, we have dancing and we have also expressing of how we feel like say gratitude of what the people, that person has contributed to us or what that person has made us or changed our lives and to extend these values, these practices.  In February 2016 we are trying and we are working to acknowledge these workers who are here and for them to be reminded that they are acknowledged as well so although they are suffering inside, like not being with the family and children during Christmas time, we will have to give them the importance… one day, a day in the year of 2016 and that’s going to be the Philippines-New Zealand connection wherein we will try to identify the outstanding workers in the companies and together with that we will also acknowledge the achievers, the children of the established migrants despite the distance of the influences, they have carried those values in terms of education, in terms of contribution, in terms of giving out their talents to the utmost or shall we say, the talents that have been achieved and that have been nurtured while they were here. So that is what we’re going to do and this is going to be a special moment for them, these photos and we have to be thankful of technology, the Facebook and this is where we try to connect from the distance between the oceans we have that connection. And with this event, Filipinos and their families will know that wherever they are they’re being acknowledged and they are valued. |
| Sally | Do you get a sense that not only the Filipino community but the wider Christchurch community, do you get a sense from the Filipinos or the other migrants you are speaking with that there’s a sense of acknowledgment from the wider community? Do other people value what’s happening? |
| Delia | I would say so because families, private families who are wanting to get something done in the house they would know that… they hear a lot about carpenters, about painters, about builders and by word of mouth they ask someone, a friend of a friend to say, can we ask him to do this for us? And that’s valuing their talent. And also in terms of the schools, school programmes, they would ask a contribution and because this is the theme here. The trust of the Government to magnify and to give importance to the migrants being a multicultural society and we have a lot of community events that would seek and that would ask and that would request contributions coming from the different countries and not only as we say the Filipinos but all migrants coming from the different nations.  Also hearing their own songs is a learning process, it makes someone who is observing think of the differences and the familiarities, similarities of their culture and would say that’s learning the history of a country without reading the book. Like, how come the costume is similar to this country? There would have been a connection in the past and knowing that the costume would tell you the mood of the people, the music would also tell you what was the temperament when that history occurred in certain countries and the movements of the dance, the hands, the head, facial expression, what are the values, the characteristics of the certain people? So I would say these all are being appreciated by someone who is a Kiwi and someone who would come from the other end of the world and I would say that we are all… This is universal, trying and understanding all cultures - and this is where the richness of Christchurch would be. We are a diverse country and we come in different colours, we may come in different languages but we have that same emotional feeling and that all starts with a smile! |
| Sally | So beautifully put. Just one more idea I’d like to really touch on briefly is valuing and if we have a sense of… Lana, perhaps you’re the best one to answer this, a sense of how much the migrants are bringing to Christchurch in terms of their contribution? |
| Lana | Their economic contribution? |
| Sally | If that’s possible. |
| Lana | There’s not a clean number around it, again, but I do have a sense that it’s a significant portion of the workforce that we’ve required in terms of rebuilding our city - so as you know, the labour market drives migration, our migration is incredibly high right now because the labour market requires certain skills that we can’t source locally - and that sets the scene for all migration. So we can’t bring in people unless we need those people; that’s the idea of the migration strategy. So because of that and because of the numbers, there is probably - and again, with the larger employers that I work with - 25% to 50% of their workforce would be people that weren’t born here and those would be engineering firms and IT firms and manufacturing firms, as well as construction and trades firms, that need to source their labour from offshore in order to fill their skills gap. So that’s a pretty big number but of course on the streets you can see it. I mean, all you do is walk around the CBD and you can visibly see the number of migrants that are building our commercial buildings at the moment - and those are the ones that look like migrants, what about the ones that have come from Europe, from South Africa, from North America or from South America that you can’t actually tell that they’re a migrant? They’re contributing to the workforce as well.  I remember standing next to a project manager of a large construction company here who was talking about just how much this large construction company is reliant on their Filipino workforce and that people don’t realise that about half of the work that their major commercial contract company does is engineered, is built, is painted and plastered by people that were born in the Philippines. It is a significant amount that the economic contribution of that group is making, but don’t get me started on the cultural, musical, recreational, emotional and educational contributions that they’re making because that’s significant too. |
| Sally | That seems like an excellent place to wind up. Thank you very much everyone, we’re out of time for today unfortunately. Thank you to our guests, Lana and Delia.  Tune in again for the third Wednesday of January, that’s the 20th of January or the following Sunday the 24th and we’ll be speaking about Christchurch, an accessible city? (With a big question mark behind it). Enjoy the summer break and just for you listeners out there, we’ve just started a Facebook page so Facebook search for “Speak Up - Korerotia” and “Like”! And remember - helping migrants integrate starts with a smile so let’s all bear that in mind as we move forward. Thanks a lot. |
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