

## MIGRANT DREAMS

### LOGLINE

A group of migrant women farm workers dare to resist the systemic oppression and exploitation from their brokers, employers and Canadian government in small-town Leamington, Ontario.

### SYNOPSIS

A powerful feature documentary by multiple award-winning director Min Sook Lee (*El Contrato*, *Hogtown*, *Tiger Spirit*) and Emmy award-winning producer Lisa Valencia-Svensson (*Herman's House*), tells the untold story of migrant agricultural workers struggling against Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) that treats foreign workers as modern-day indentured labourers. Under the rules of Canada's migrant labour program, low wage migrants are tied to one employer.

Local activist Cathy sets up secretive meetings with Evelyn, a member of Justice for Migrant Workers. They are the lifeline for a group of Indonesian migrant agricultural workers who find themselves trapped in a web of lies and coerced by threats of deportation from agents and greenhouse owners. The workers, most of whom are women, have been recruited to work in Canada packing vegetables inside greenhouse operations, by agents who illegally charge upwards to seven thousand dollars in agency fees. Unable to afford the levy, migrants use their Canadian wages to pay back their debt to the agents. The workers' dreams are pinned to the hope that their two-year contracts will be renewed for another two years. Only 'good behavior' will secure a contract renewal. Speaking out is the last thing they can afford to do. But by the time we meet the group, comprised mostly of women, speaking out and resisting is the only thing left to do.

Nanik is a mother who sends money home so her husband, teenage son and young daughter can have better education and lives.

Umi sends money to support her mother back home while dreaming of starting a small business. But when she defies the agent and moves out of company controlled housing, her hours are cut, the employer demands her passport and her job is threatened. When tragedy strikes and her mother dies, Umi is stranded in Canada, alone to grieve, far from home.

Dwipa and Rahmi are women from different religions who fall in love and decide to get married. But the backlash of homophobia and religious intolerance is almost immediate. Their agent contacts the families back home to inform them of the 'illicit' marriage. Dwipa is tricked into illegality by the employer who promised a renewed contract but never delivers.

In a dramatic twist, an anonymous caller alerts the police to the extortion payments demanded by the agent. The women must decide who is willing to risk their lives and cooperate with the police investigation. One has nothing left to lose. For others, the risk to their safety and livelihood is too great.

*Migrant Dreams* exposes the underbelly of the Canadian government labour program that has built a system designed to empower brokers and growers to exploit, dehumanize and deceive migrant workers who have virtually no access to support or information in their own language. Workers willing to pay exorbitant fees to work at minimum wage jobs packing the fruits and vegetables we eat in our homes. Migrant workers who deserve basic labour and human rights. Canada it seems, has failed them.