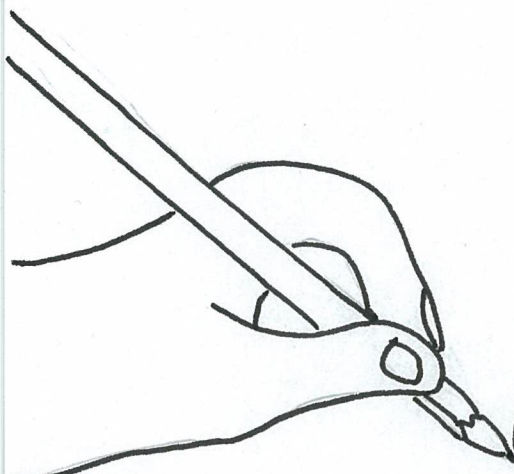




CONCLUSION



Législatives: «Je veux faire le ménage»
à l'Assemblée, lance la femme de
chambre Rachel Kéké



From chambermaid to MP: Rachel Keke's
journey to the Assemblée Nationale

The French legislative elections of 2022 yielded a victory for a hotel chambermaid, and an upset in a close race against the incumbent MP from President Macron's party. Born in Ivory Coast, Rachel Kéké had led a strike for better working conditions at a Paris hotel.

Now she is in Parliament.

From the private, hidden sphere of cleaning and caring, women - and men - are becoming public figures, whether they speak out explicitly in favor of better working conditions or express themselves more obliquely with their enigmatic persona.

Another servant figure to come out of obscurity and into the limelight is nanny/photographer Vivian Maier (1926-2009).

Maier was an unusual nanny, who took the children she cared for with her on her walks around Chicago, sometimes to tough neighborhoods, where she would take photographs. She kept her photographs private, until she ran out of money late in life and auctioned them off.

Now her photographs are on exhibit in galleries and museums all over the world.

I end on Rachel Kéké and Virian Maier, two women who intentionally and less intentionally moved from the obscurity of their domestic identity to greater visibility as hyphenated selves (the cleaner-M.P. and the nanny-photographer), but I hope that all the women - and the few men - who figure in this story have achieved some level of noteworthiness as well.

This back and forth that I assembled between the real and the fictional, the invented and the factual, was meant to make more complex, more ambiguous, and more nuanced the image we hold in our minds regarding cleaners and caregivers.



