



Anonymous



This worker was born in Bonao where she now works for TOS Dominicana in the knitting department in order to support her four-year old son. She is a single mother, who struggles to support her son on wages of 2,200 pesos (\$67.00) a week. This is not enough to cover food, rent and schooling for her son. Many weeks she has to borrow money or work a double shift, amounting to 84 hours a week, just to keep up with living expenses. She worries about the health problems from breathing in the fabric dust in the factory and feels exhausted by the twelve-hour workday. She hopes for a wage that would allow her to meet her basic expenses and a work schedule that does not leave her exhausted.

In her own words:

I am an operator and I work with the machines that make fabric in the knitting department. I don't like my work but because I don't have any other way to support myself, I have to do it, but I work a lot for very little money.

I wake up at 6:00 am to begin work at 7:00 am and I get home at 8:00 pm. The work is not easy because they don't let us sit down. I work twelve hours a day and as much as I want to stop and rest I have to keep going because the rules don't allow us to sit down. When I leave my feet and back hurt badly.

They say at work that the dust from the fabric doesn't harm us. People say it's bad to breathe in dust for just five minutes, but imagine me, breathing in the dust for 48 hours a week. That must do something to me. They assure us that it won't do us any harm, but I'm not sure. What I do know that I get colds and flu very often now.

There are no windows there and there are only emergency exit doors which they keep closed. There are no fans, and they say there is air conditioning but the heat is so strong from all the heat from the machines that you can barely feel it. And grease falls from the machines and it sweats off the floor. It was so bad when the air system broke down that we had to evacuate because we were suffocating.

There are only two fifteen minute breaks and they get angry with you if you arrive late, and they have even fired people for it. But there is such a long line in the cafeteria because there are 1,000 workers and only one cashier that you spend all your break time in line.

I live with my son who is four years old and we survive off my wages from the factory which are 2,200 pesos (\$67.00) a week for 48 hours of work. This is very little money for twelve hours of work a week, which ends up being 15 with transportation, but if I took a motorbike to work I would spend all the money on gasoline. I spend 400 pesos (\$12.00) a week on food at the factory. If I ate at every break I would

have to spend 520 pesos (\$16.00) a week but if I spent that much I might as well stay home because I won't earn enough, so I have to hold back. I spend 250 pesos (\$8.00) for cereal for my son, with the other food he needs and the school money I barely have 600 pesos (\$18.00) left over to pay for rent. Of course there are weeks when there is not enough, it happens often for me because I am a single mother. I have to borrow money, but I can't borrow money every week.

Sometimes I end my four day shift, and then work another three-day shift to make ends meet. That's 84 hours a week, just to earn 4,800 or 5,000 pesos (\$146.00 - \$156.00). In those weeks I work hard just to be able to earn a little more to cover my costs or pay for what I couldn't afford the week before. Those weeks I only have 1 day of rest after 84 hours before starting again with 48 hours of work. You end up with no time for anything.

We in the knitting department would be okay with earning 2,800 pesos (\$85.00) or at least 2,500 (\$76.00) in order to live. Things here are expensive but you can at least survive with 2,500. With 3,000 (\$91.00) we wouldn't have it so hard.

I work during the day, but my neighbor works at night. She leaves at 6:00 pm and she comes home at 8:00 am but she wakes up at 11:00 am because she can't sleep in the heat. This ruins people.

They say there is a union, but I don't know if it is working yet. From what my coworkers say the union will make things better so if it is true it seems like a good idea. The majority of us support the union and are members. I would like to have better wages and to work a normal workday of eight hours instead of twelve.