

Subject: Magdalena
Date: November 5th, 2011
Interviewer: Anne Greenleaf
Edited by: Alicia Arnold
Duration: 58:00

NOTE: This is not a transcript. This document comprises interview notes from the interview conducted with 'Magdalena' in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, on November 5th, 2012. We hope to provide a direct transcript in Spanish and English as soon as resources become available.

What is your job right now? What are your responsibilities?

I start my job at 5:50 am until 2:40 pm. The supervisor treats me as if he was my dad. I can't go to the bathroom, and I have just fifteen minutes to take breakfast. If I do not follow the rules, they punish me. My lunchtime is thirty minutes, before then, I have no time to eat, go to the bathroom or drink water. If I feel sick, I can only go to the nurse during my lunchtime. I have worked here since February 17th, 2005.

What is your background and how did you start working here?

I grew up with my grandma and sister. My grandma worked at the market selling fruits and vegetables. I was married very young at fourteen years old. Then I moved with my husband. When I had my second child, we moved near here because I wanted to leave my husband. I moved in with my sister, with my two daughters. My sister took care of my daughters, and I began looking for work. That is how I ended up here. I reconciled with my husband in 2008, and we have another daughter. We live together with our three children. My sister works in the same place I work.

What are your feelings about the other operators? What is your relationship with the other women?

There are thirty people, and over half are women. We have a good relationship, but we cannot talk because it is prohibited. In the factory, we cannot use cell phones. We have to act like machines. If we do not watch what we are doing at all times, we can make mistakes. People work in different positions in the maquilas, which cause many pains in the body. We must be very careful what we are doing because we cannot talk.

Is there a union in your factory?

We have tried to form a union, but it is prohibited. So this year my sister met with people from a union, they are friends. She invited us to sit in. That is how my motivation to form a union began. Right now we have 67 members. The groups before us were fired. The manager said that he was having a bad experience with us, so that is why they moved from Mexico to Honduras.

One of the heads of the factory made it clear that we could not be with more than two people at a time because they didn't want us planning things. So after work, we would have meetings and organize ourselves.

What is your view on your relationship to management?

Only the pretty girls have a good relationship with them. No one else likes to deal with them. I don't know anyone else's opinion.

What are the challenges you find with working?

It is always tough work. We have to keep the same intensity of work throughout the entire day. In my work there are too many pregnant ladies. One lady with twins worked at a table and the table would hurt her stomach. Because it is a high-risk pregnancy, she went to social security. They told her that the factory was too much work and standing, and that the factory had to give her a chair. When she told her boss this, he asked, "Which do you prefer, your children or your job?" She does not work here anymore, because she was forced to stand.

Why do you think it is easier for your friend to quit than for her to do the rest of the job?

In this case she must quit, because it is very difficult to get the factory to change. The other managers were under this supervisor, who always has the last say. They do not listen to us at all. The factory has its own particular inspectors from the labor industry. In that factory, only those two particular inspectors came again and again. The inspectors never say anything because they come each time, and no one will say anything.

When you are doing the same thing over and over, do you have to focus 100%?

It is the only thing I can think about. One time my child came to the factory with my sister and one guard saw her and for that, the owners took repercussions to my sister. They forced her to clean the warehouse, to do the work she has to do during the day in two factories. They would move her around very frequently. My sister now has back problems, and it affects her a lot.

How do you get home when you are done with work for the day?

I have to walk a very long distance to take the public transportation. It takes me 45 minutes to get home. I feel exhausted; my whole body hurts a lot.

What do you do when you get home usually?

My daughter usually gives me a massage when I get home. We usually make dinner after that and clean up the house. For dinner I like to make tortillas. I usually go to sleep around 10pm. I feel tired all day, when I get home I try to spend time with my daughters until about six when I start to get tired. After dinner my husband plays with her. Then we all read the bible together and talk about what we read. At 10pm everyone goes to bed.

Do you get just one day off work and what do you do?

Yes, we only have one day off. In the morning I do laundry and visit my mother. Around 3 pm, we all go to the church. We have gone to the same church for three years. On my day off we go there until 7 pm. We sing, pray, sometimes we dance, and it is beautiful. It is very important in my life.

Why is church important to you?

Because it makes me feel better.

What do you hope for your future?

In the future I want to see my daughters have better things than I had. I wish that the laws would be better. I don't want to see my daughters working in a factory. I pray for my daughters.

Do your daughters have a dream for what they want to be yet?

One of my daughters wants to travel. The second one wants to be a dentist, although I don't think it will happen.

Is there anything you want to tell us?

There are too many things to talk about. Talking about the factory is really hard. I really hope that change will happen. My attention is on work, but we deserve better conditions, for everyone.

[End of Interview]