

Subject: Reyna Dominguez

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NOTE: This is not a transcript. This document comprises interview notes from the interview conducted with Reyna Dominguez 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.

Can you tell us your name and organization?

Reyna Dominguez. Fruit of the Loom Corporation, Jerzees Nuevo Dia. I'm part of the union of this factory and on the board.

Where did you come from and how did you come to work in the maquilas?

I finished elementary school at 12 years old. I started at the maquila at 14 years old. I usually work in Korean factories. I started working with a fake ID because I was a minor. Violence was very typical at that time because all workers were minors. We were forced to work extra time without pay. I had to do it because I needed the job desperately. I helped my family with their jobs. We had to endure people beating us because there weren't any other options. I worked in the Korean factory until I was 18 years old. They don't respect our rights. At that time my salary was 140 Lempiras per week.

Can you tell us how much you can buy with that per week?

My dream was to save for rent because I lived with my stepmother. I saved 46 Lempiras and gave 100 Lempiras to my mom. I couldn't help my family. But when I quit the Korean factory. I worked more than three years for them, they only gave me 738 Lempiras when I was done working there. Then I started to work in another factory, a U.S. factory. This factory worked with the brand, GAP, and then they moved to Mexico. They closed all the factories in Honduras. They respected us a little better but still had labor violations. There was an obligation to work extra time. We worked the whole day and night. I often didn't leave till the next day. I rested for only four hours and then had to get back to the job to do it all over again. It was a necessity because I was building my own house with my parents. I had no other option. I finished the house with my dad. Then I got married. But I had bad luck. My partner was irresponsible with my children. I had four children with him. My oldest daughter is 13. I realize that all women have to pass through this, these violations. I am a single mother. Then I started another relationship because I was going through a hard time. I had two more kids with this man. When I started to be a member of the unions, I had some problems with my partner because men here don't understand when a female wants to know more about her own rights and fight for them. My youngest daughter is 5 years old. We heard about all the benefits the unions could bring. We thought it was a good idea to find an organization to help us. We were in a central union for a

year, before we got in contact with the CGT. The owners of the factory started to fire people but we didn't know why because we didn't know how they knew we were having meeting to start a union. That was four years ago. Four years ago when someone talked about starting a union it was something very different, weird. We went a year without hearing from that union so we sought out a new organization. We found a pamphlet on the street that said something about CGT and Evangelina. So with two other coworkers we called CGT. At the time, I had a calling card with minutes or public calls and we hid when we called because the phone was in the cafeteria. One of my coworkers was calling and the others were looking out for people to come. When Evangelina from CGT answered, we asked for a meeting that day but she was already leaving the office. She told us to come the next day and we went. At that time forming a union meant being fired. Some people said we could find other jobs if we left this one. The first thing Evangelina asked was why we were there - to form a union or to get paid for overtime. She told us: "here at the CGT, our doors are wide open for the workers who need to form a union". However, for other issues, CGT is not always able to help. We were shocked. We took the responsibility to form our union. Evangelina told us we were all taking a risk and that we needed to recruit one or two people to join each day. She told us it was urgent to tell others in the factory. We looked at each other and thought "let's do it". We started bringing these ideas to the production lines. This is how in fifteen days we organized the union with 78 members. The factory fired some coworkers. Fifteen days after that our union was notified. We took responsibility as part of the board of the union, so we had to deal with our jobs, family and the union. It was very difficult because all that responsibility was very hard for us. When all this was happening one supervisor called me a rebel. When we went to the CGT it was Elsa, Doris, Marina and Reyna. When they notified that the union was formed, we had to form the board. Elsa was the President at the time and she and Marina had to notify the factory that the union had been formed. My supervisor called me and questioned why I was involved in the situation. What had the company done to me to be involved in this ridiculous thing? They said that because the company had been so good to the workers, we were making a mess and the factory was going to close and then everyone would lose their job. So I denied it and said I was not part of a union. A few hours after that, the Human Resources officer called to inform all the supervisors and managers that a union had formed in the factory. It was like the union had tied their hands. Supervisors were rude, but had to change for the union; attitudes, treatment. For them it was very difficult. Because in their minds they were the bosses. They had to act a different way because of the union. In the maquilas, business is very difficult because of all the violence and discrimination. Hanes brand, etc were extreme violators of rights. Some coworkers had physical problems and couldn't use their arms due to the excessively high production goals. Any worker can handle no more than three years in these conditions. Repetitive activity for three years means you develop physical problems, damage. Until those three years when a worker can work he is making money but after the damage their salary decreases. If I am ill, in my arms or back, they will take me out and pay me the minimum salary. I was a strong worker, but now I have no protection. As a member of the union we worry because the owners and bosses intimidate the workers. The warning is they will leave the country if we form unions. And we are a poor country and need the jobs and opportunities. Those workers who work under this law do whatever the factory wants them to do. They probably hope to form a union, but they still have the fear if those companies leave we will lose our jobs and not be able to provide for our families. They treat us very poorly. For us it is very important for the students in the U.S. to help and prove what is happening here. It's important for us that the students are here. Students can

make demands on the brands to change our labor conditions. We ask the students to please watch what the brands will do. This is the only way we can find how they are improving labor standards.

Can you tell us some of the specific violations that led you to form a union in the first place? What were the typical violations?

The bad traits of the supervisors and managers. For example, they never told us about benefits from Fruit of the Loom. Russell gave us some benefits, but when Fruit of the Loom came they did not. That is why we made our decision. The brands must respect the benefits and our time.

You said they treated you very badly. What kind of treatment and things would they say to you?

They didn't let us use the bathroom. Pregnant women didn't have priority. Supervisors turned very violent. They wouldn't open doors. No one listened to what the workers were saying. We couldn't handle it. Russell gave us money as a loan for overtime. We didn't pay interest. For us this was a good benefit from Russell. But when Fruit of the Loom came, they took away the loans. They paid us overtime but we lost record of how many evenings we were working. Russell kept all the overtime records we worked in the factory. It was different with Fruit of the Loom they lost all the records after the year was over.

Who were your managers at Fruit of the Loom and Russell? Did they change or stay the same?

They changed managers. The Russell manager's name was Louis and he knew how to treat the workers. He was always able to listen to us. It was a good working environment. The manager changed to Jose Fernandez with Fruit of the Loom. We never saw his face and he never talked to anyone. All those things forced us to form the union.

Do you know where these managers were recruited from? Were they local or from somewhere else?

They came from the same corporation. Jose was from the corporation.

Was he from Honduras?

Yes

You said it was sometimes difficult to recruit people to join. Can you talk about some of the challenges in trying to get people to join?

The hardest part was to keep our jobs, while ensuring respect for our rights.

You have six children?

Yes.

Can you tell us some of the challenges working in the Maquila having six children?

In this moment, even my family doesn't support my decision to be a member of the union and it's not easy. I have responsibilities in the company, the organization and with my family. But my goal is to teach them all this knowledge I have from the union. I try to inform them about equality because I have boys and girls. Now I am a single mother. So I'm teaching my family to be equal because all the men are machistas. But I teach them that girls are more sensitive and have to be trained differently. I have more arguments to tell them their rights and obligations in life. It is not easy to be a mother of six, but we have to learn how to handle these things in life and face them. And we need to teach children responsibilities. I use myself as an example for them. Because I don't want them to experience the same things I have experienced so it is hard work daily. My schedule is full all the time. I have to deal with a lot of cases. We have to respond to everyone by phone. But I still have production goals within the factory. I have to make the money for my family. After work I go to the CGT because there are many coworkers that need their cases exposed. Then at home I do homework with my children.

How old are your children?

Oldest: 13, 11, 9, 7, 6, 4.5

Why were they hesitant about you being a member of the union? Were they worried about your time, or your safety?

Since I started they were worried. My dad told me the history. My dad worked for the same company since he was 28, and the last year someone tried to form a union, someone gave him a gun and offered him money to kill the member. He didn't do it. So he went to that person and told him to leave because "the boss asked me to kill you". So my dad warned him and that union worker left the country. That's why my dad was always worried about me. That's why my family is worried about me being a member. We have passed through hard times. I never tell them the problems. Sometimes they can see I'm tired and worried, but I don't want to worry them. Because I know I need my job for my family. Also I have a love for the union. We got our jobs thank to the unions. When the factory was closed, as a union member I felt the pressure to get those 1003 and members to get their jobs back. But we still didn't compromise with them, those are the dangers of our work.

You see CGT every day after work?

Yes all the days.

What time do you finish at the maquila?

4:30pm

How long do you stay at CGT?

One to two hours. Sometimes I have to stay there until 10pm.

Do your parents look after your children in the evenings?

Yes.

Do they live with you?

I have my own house. We don't live together but my children go to my parents house and when I finish I pick them up.

How do you get around? Do you have a car or do you take the bus?

No, I use the bus.

From CGT to home how long does it take you?

Thirty minutes from CGT to my house.

Is it dangerous?

It's very dangerous.

What kind of danger?

Robberies. If you don't have the money the criminals can hurt you. Also we are scared to walk alone and the company knows that we have to walk.

Do you have any time to spend with your children during the day? When you get home at night?

I spend time with them for maybe two and half hours after at 8pm. And Sundays all day.

What do you typically do on your day off?

Laundry, clean the house all the things I don't have time to do during the week.

[End of Interview]