



Chinese Canadian National Council
Toronto Chapter

A BETTER FUTURE FOR WORKERS



MY NAME IS MAY AND I AM 23 YEARS OLD. I CAME TO CANADA WITH MY MOM AND BROTHER FROM SOUTH AMERICA WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER. MY MOM SAID SHE CAME TO CANADA IN HOPE OF A BETTER FUTURE FOR US.

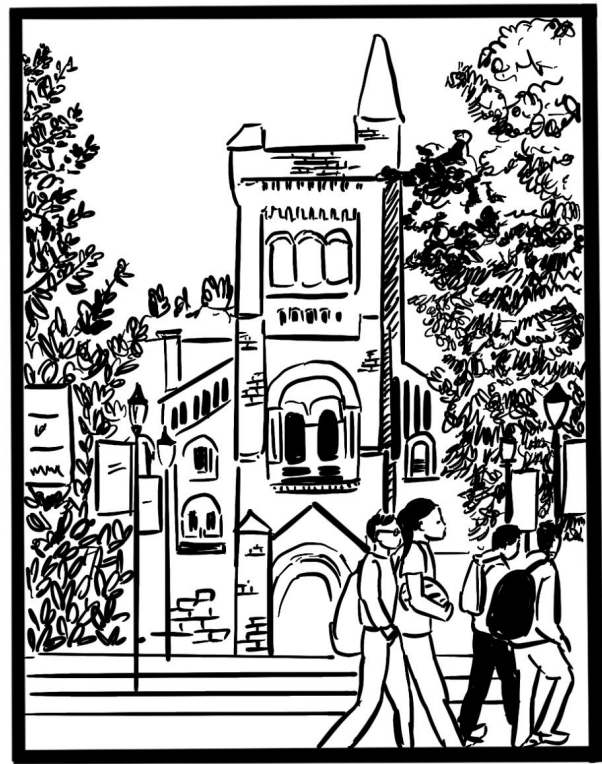


SOMETIMES I'M ASKED WHY I DIDN'T GO TO UNIVERSITY BUT WENT STRAIGHT TO WORK AFTER HIGH SCHOOL.





WHEN I WAS 18 AND ABOUT TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL, I FELT ANXIOUS ABOUT MY FUTURE AS I DIDN'T HAVE THE IMMIGRATION STATUS TO ALLOW ME TO STUDY IN UNIVERSITY. MY FRIENDS HAD PLANS TO GO TO POST-SECONDARY, BUT THAT WASN'T AN OPTION FOR ME.



WITHOUT STATUS, THE ONLY WAY TO GET INTO POST-SECONDARY IS TO APPLY AS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT. THIS WAS TOO EXPENSIVE FOR MY FAMILY TO AFFORD. I FELT CONFUSED AND UNABLE TO SHARE MY FEELINGS WITH MY FRIENDS. IT WAS A LONELY TIME.



AT THE SAME TIME, MY MOM WASN'T EARNING MINIMUM WAGE AS A BUSSER, AND SHE NEEDED MY HELP TO PAY THE BILLS. SO INSTEAD OF GOING TO POST-SECONDARY, I STARTED WORKING TO HELP MY FAMILY.



ONE OF MY FIRST JOBS WAS AT A CHINESE RESTAURANT. IT WAS HORRIBLE.

I SERVED DISHES AS A BUSSER. IT WAS PHYSICALLY DEMANDING. I OFTEN WENT TO BED WITH SORE MUSCLES AND ACHING BONES. I TRIED TO SUCK IT UP. AFTER ALL, IF MY MOM COULD DO THIS, SO COULD I. AFTER WAKING UP, I'D GO TO WORK AGAIN. I NEVER GOT A CHANCE TO LET MY BODY RECOVER FROM EXHAUSTION.

MY CO-WORKERS
OFTEN ASKED ME
TO COVER THEIR
SHIFTS . IF I
DIDN'T AGREE ,
THEY WOULD YELL
AT ME DR ISOLATE
ME FRDM OTHERS.



SOMETIMES I WORKED 70 HOURS
A WEEK WITH AN HOURLY RATE OF
\$11. THERE WAS NO OVERTIME PAY,
NO VACATION PAY, AND NO PUBLIC
HOLIDAY PAY. I DIDN'T GET MY
SHARE OF TIPS AND WOULD ONLY
GET PAID IN CASH. THIS FELT WRONG.

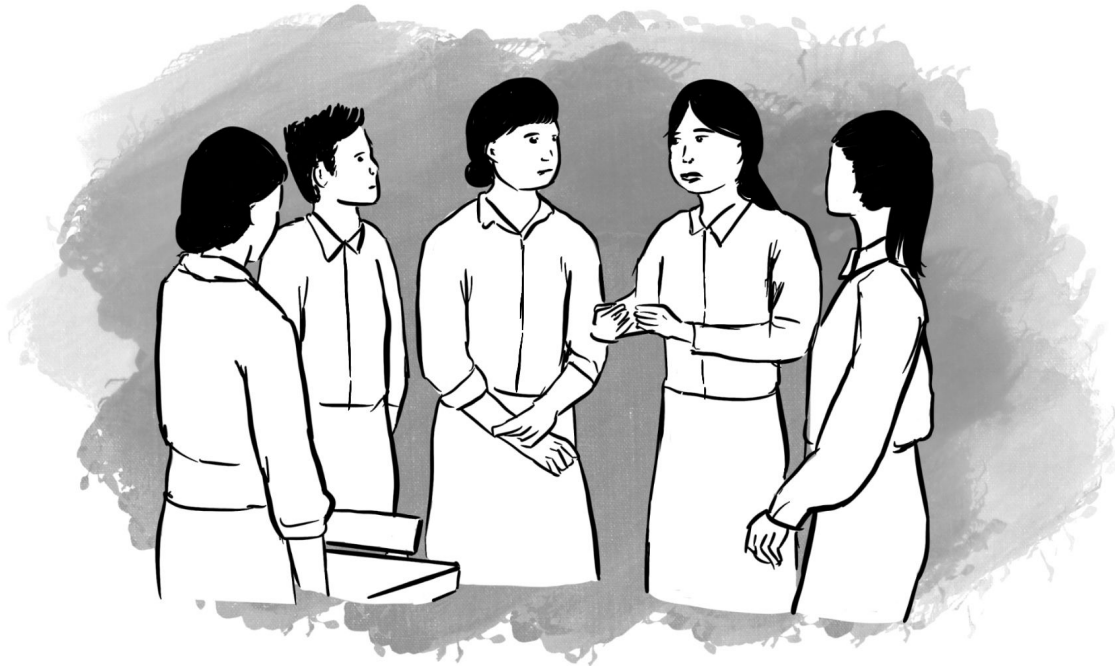




I SOON REALIZED A LOT OF MY CO-WORKERS AND I DIDN'T HAVE THE INFORMATION ON HOW TO PROTECT OURSELVES IN THE WORKPLACE. WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE ABOUT OUR RIGHTS, WE LACKED COURAGE TO FIGHT BACK.



I GOT IN TOUCH WITH CCNCTO WITH THE HELP OF A FRIEND. AFTER ATTENDING SEVERAL EVENTS, I WAS ABLE TO CONNECT MY INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE WITH LARGER SYSTEMIC ISSUES LIKE RACISM AND DISCRIMINATORY IMMIGRATION POLICY.



ONCE I GAINED MORE KNOWLEDGE, I KNEW WHAT I EXPERIENCED AS A WORKER WAS WRONG - I WAS BEING EXPLOITED. THAT'S WHEN I STARTED REACHING OUT TO OTHER YOUNG WORKERS LIKE MYSELF IN ONTARIO, AND TELL THEM ABOUT OUR LABOUR RIGHTS, AND THE TOOLS WE COULD USE TO FIGHT BACK.



I FEEL CHINESE WORKERS NEED TO UNITE TO FIGHT BAD EMPLOYERS. ONE WAY TO DO THAT IS BY FORMING CHINESE WORKER SOLIDARITY NETWORKS AND JOINING UNIONS. WE ALSO NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT OUR RIGHTS SO THAT EMPLOYERS WON'T BULLY US.



THAT'S WHY I THINK THE WORKER CALENDAR IS REALLY USEFUL BECAUSE IT'S A TOOL THAT ENCOURAGES FOLKS RECEIVING CASH TO TAKE CLEAR RECORDS OF THEIR WORKING CONDITIONS.



THESE DAYS I CONTINUE TO WORK TO SURVIVE AND SUPPORT MY FAMILY, ESPECIALLY MY YOUNGER BROTHER AND HIS FUTURE. BUT I'M ALSO FIGHTING FOR A BETTER WORKPLACE, AND A MORE JUST FUTURE FOR OTHER WORKERS LIKE ME.

May's Story - 梅的故事

May is a 23 year old woman and young worker

梅是 23 岁的女青年工人

Image 1/第一象

Fighting for a Better Future 为了更好的未来而奋斗

My name is May and I am 23 years old. I came to Canada with my mom and brother from South America when I was a teenager. When I asked my mom what made her decide to move our family, she said she came to Canada in hope of a better future for us. 我叫梅，今年 23 岁。在我十几岁的时候，我和妈妈、弟弟从南美来到加拿大。当我问妈妈是什么让她决定让我们举家搬迁时，她说来加拿大是希望我们能有更好的未来。

I've been working full-time since I was 18 years old, at Chinese restaurants and factories, and in several customer service jobs. 我从 18 岁起就开始全职工作了，在不同的中国餐馆、工厂辗转工作，也做过几份客户服务的工作。

Sometimes I'm asked why I didn't go to university but went straight to work after high school. I didn't always feel comfortable answering, or sharing details about my life. 当人们问我为什么不继续读书而是在高中毕业后直接工作时，我告诉他们我需要挣钱养活自己，还要养家。但是，当我说这些话或者透露更多我生活细节的时候，我并不是很自在。

Image 2/第二象

When I was 18 and about to graduate from high school, I felt anxious about my future. As I didn't have the immigration status to allow me to study in university. My friends had plans to go to post-secondary. But that wasn't an option for me. 当我 18 岁时，我对我的未来感到

焦虑，因为我没有移民身份，无法在大学学习。我的大多数高中朋友都在接受高等教育，而我却在工作。我感到困惑，无法与朋友分享我的感受。我感到非常孤立。

Without status, the only way to get into post-secondary is to apply as an international student. This was too expensive for my family to afford. I felt confused and unable to share my feelings with my friends. It was a lonely time. 如果没有身份，进入高等院校的唯一途径就是作为国际学生申请。这对我的家庭来说太昂贵了，我们负担不起。

At the same time, my mom wasn't earning minimum wage as a busser. And she needed my help to pay the bills. So, instead of going to post-secondary, I started working to help my family. 与此同时，我妈妈在一家中餐馆当服务生，而且挣不到最低工资，她需要我的帮助来支付各种生活账单。所以，我没有继续学业，而是开始全职工作来养活家人。

One of my first jobs was at a Chinese restaurant. It was horrible. I served dishes as a busser. It was physically demanding. I often went to bed with sore muscles and aching bones. I tried to suck it up after all. If my mom could do this, so could I. After waking up, I'd go to work again. I never got a chance to let my body recover from exhaustion. 我的第一份工作是在一家中餐馆。那份工作很糟糕。我的工作职责是作为服务生端盘子。这对体力要求很高。拖着疲惫的身体、酸痛的肌肉上床睡觉，对我来说是家常便饭。我试着不抱怨。我想，如果别人能做到，我也可以。醒来后，我又要去工作。我从来没有让身体从疲惫中喘口气的机会。

Image 3/第三象

My co-workers often asked me to cover their shifts. If I didn't agree, they would yell at me or isolate me from others. 我的同事们经常要求我替他们轮班。如果我不同意，他们就会对我大喊大叫，或者把我孤立起来。

Sometimes I worked 70 hours a week with an hourly rate of \$11. There was no overtime pay, no vacation pay, and no public holiday pay. I didn't get my share of tips, and would only get paid in cash. This felt wrong. 有时我一周工作 70 个小时，时薪 11 加元。没有加班费，没有假期工资，也没有公共假日工资。而且我得不到自己的小费，工资也只能拿现金。

Image 4/第四象

I soon realized a lot of my co-workers and I didn't have the information on how to protect ourselves in the workplace. Without knowledge about our rights, we lacked courage to fight back. 我刚开始工作后发现，我和我的很多同事都没有如何在工作场所保护自己的信息。由于不了解我们的权利，我们没有勇气进行反击。

I got in touch with CCNCTO with the help of a friend. After attending several events, I was able to connect my individual experience with larger systemic issues like racism and discriminatory immigration policy. 在一位朋友的帮助下，我和平权会取得了联系。在参加了几次活动后，我明白了我的个人经历与种族主义和歧视性移民政策等更大的系统性问题是紧密相关的。

Once I gained more knowledge, I knew what I experienced as a worker was wrong - I was being exploited. That's when I started reaching out to other young workers like myself in Ontario, and telling them about our labour rights and the tools we could use to fight back. 我知道我作为一个工人所经历的事情是错误的。这就是为什么我开始接触其他像我一样的年轻工人，告诉他们我们在安大略省的劳工权利，以及我们可以用来反击的工具。

Image 5/第五象

I feel Chinese workers need to unite in order to fight bad employers. One way to do that is by forming our own Chinese worker solidarity networks and joining unions. We also need to know more about our rights so that employers won't bully us. 我觉得华工需要团结起来，来对抗那些没有良心的雇主。其中一个方法就是组建我们自己的华工团结网络，并加入工会。我们也需要更多地了解我们的权利，这样雇主就不会欺负我们。

That's why I think the worker calendar is really useful because it's a tool that encourages folks receiving cash to take clear records of their working conditions.这就是为什么我认为工人日历非常有用，因为它是一个工具，可以鼓励拿现金的工人对他们的工作条件进行明确的记录。

These days, I continue to work to survive and support my family, especially my younger brother and his future. But I'm also fighting for a better workplace, and for a more just future for other workers like me. 如今，我仍然努力工作养活自己和我的家人，特别是为了我的弟弟和他的未来。但我也在为更好的工作环境而奋斗，为像我一样的其他工人争取一个更公正的未来。