

Sweatshop Nation

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL MOBILIZATION AGAINST SWEATSHOPS

Issue 3

Fall 2001

Join us in Fighting for Workers' Health

Demand that Pataki:
Overhaul Workers Comp
End Compulsory Long Hours

DEMONSTRATE!

Wed., Oct. 3, 12 Noon
At the Gov.'s Office
633 Third Ave. in Manhattan.
Between 40th and 41st St.
(Take the 4, 5, 6 or 7 train to
42nd Street-Grand Central.)

Mobilization Meeting to Prepare for Oct. 3 Protest

Sun., Sept. 23, 5pm
The YWCA Community
Room
30 Third Avenue, corner of
Atlantic Ave., downtown Bklyn.
Take 2,3,4,5,Q to Atlantic or
N,R,W to Pacific

NMASS' 5th Year Celebration!

Oct. 27 Sat., 4pm-10 pm
Memorial Hall at the YWCA
30 Third Ave., Brooklyn

Raffle Prizes! Music! Dinner!
Poetry & Spoken Word!

Meet the candidates for our
upcoming Board Elections!*

Housing available for out-of-
state members, space limited. Buy
tickets now!

Suggested donations are:

\$5 for members
\$25 for employed non-members
\$10 for underemployed, unem-
ployed, student non-members

* The election will be at NMASS'
Center in the Y, Nov. 11. See p. 3 &
4 for info and membership form.



Injured workers demonstrate at Workers' Compensation Board in Brooklyn.

Long hours crippling our bodies & lives

The International Labor Organization reports U.S. workers were forced to add an entire week's worth of hours to their yearly workload in the 1990s, putting the U.S. far ahead of Japan and all other industrial nations in the number of hours we work each year.

Growing numbers of injured workers are joining NMASS, bringing to light the devastation these hours and the Workers' Compensation system have had on their lives, including the loss of health, jobs, families, friends, homes and dignity.

Fueled by the urgency of their situation, injured workers are leading the charge to demand a complete overhaul of the Workers' Comp system and an end to compulsory long hours.

NMASS is mobilizing the injured and not-yet-injured to bring these demands to the man ultimately in charge of the Workers' Comp Board and of state law: Gov. George Pataki. We will demonstrate at his office on Oct. 3 (see left).

Led by injured workers, the It's About TIME campaign is calling attention to the growing numbers of us--especially women--who are getting hurt or developing health problems as a result of work. We are being worked longer and harder, forced to put in more overtime hours,

work several jobs, or put in a long day at our jobs and then work to care for our children and homes.

Those of us who apply for Workers' Comp are often left waiting on our cases for five, 10, 15 and even more years. Many of us are forced to return to work in pain (worsening our injuries), go on public assistance, or end up homeless.

But we have a chance to change things. Forty community groups, schools and churches have endorsed It's About TIME. State Assembly Member Catherine Nolan introduced a bill to end Workers' Comp delays, provide immediate interim benefits, raise minimum benefits, and make it illegal for employers to fire someone for refusing to work past 40-hours a week. In July, the *Daily News* and *Newsday* featured series of articles on work injuries and deaths. In response, Sens. Hillary Clinton and Charles Schumer called for Congressional hearings on health and safety. Nolan introduced anti-sweatshop legislation and is calling for an audit of the Workers Comp Board as well as hearings on the Board. Now it is up to us to fight harder than ever to make sure the real issues are not covered up: overhauling Workers Comp and ending long hours!

Ain't I a Woman?!

DKNY girlcott goes global

The DKNY "girlcott" is going global. In late August, NMASS members Karah Newton, Olimpia Castillo and Andrea Fabry attended the World Conference Against Racism in South Africa.

They shared with participants from around the world our approach to fighting the racism on which our country's wealth has been based--in the form of slavery, coolie labor and sweatshop conditions.

They talked particularly about how we are taking on the racism that channeled Asian and Latina women into DKNY sweatshops in New York, and that served to keep them divided and pitted against one another.

Emigrating from China, Mexico and Ecuador, these DKNY workers had come to the U.S. in the hopes of a better life. Instead, they are treated like slaves.

As part of our Ain't I a Woman?! campaign, we are uniting Asian and Latina women, along with other women workers of all races, to hold Donna Karan responsible for helping to keep this modern-day slavery alive.

'We're not servants,' says an injured home attendant

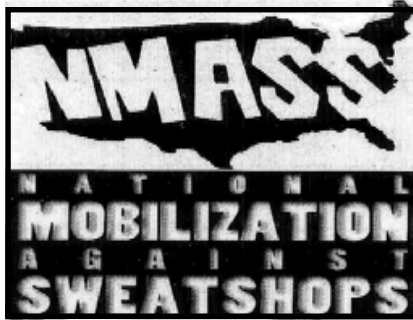
Recently, injured home attendants have started reaching out to other home attendants to let them know what happened to them after enduring long work shifts for years. Maria Charchut is one of the leaders of the It's About TIME! campaign. This is her story.

I was a home attendant for 10 years. I provided care for elderly, sick and disabled people.

My job required that I bathe, feed and give medications to the patients. I constantly had to lift patients.

But there were many chores that did not fit into my job description that I had to perform. Some of these included cleaning the house, shopping, preparing meals and doing laundry.

Some of us work 24 hours a day, spending the night at the client's residence. For this work we get paid \$12 for 12 nighttime hours. During the night, sometimes I had to get up as many as 20 times to care for my patient.



We've been leafletting in Manhattan's Fashion District about the abusive sweatshop conditions women are forced to endure producing DKNY garments in unionized factories right in that area. As a result, new workers continue to join the class-action lawsuit against Donna Karan International.

The indignities that DKNY workers have been subjected to include long hours, padlocked bathrooms, and being denied access to emergency telephone calls from their children.

Young members of NMASS are producing a video about the DKNY struggle.

Meanwhile, petitions calling on DKNY to take responsibility are flowing in from all over the country. Now we hope to see them coming from around the world.

We get injured because we're overtired. You're under a lot of stress. We face verbal abuse. Our dignity is attacked. People spit on us. It's a kind of prison.

I got injured over two years ago and have not yet returned to work. After bathing my patient and scrubbing the bathroom clean, I slipped on the wet floor. My head, neck and back hit the floor. I suffered a herniated disk.

At the time, I was afraid to report the injury because I didn't want to get fired. I stayed on the job until the end of my shift and went home.

The only way I made it through that shift was to constantly take aspirin. I was in so much pain that my family made me stay home from work.

We need to fight for our rights. We want the right to work eight hours a day at a living wage. We want the right to overtime pay. And we want respect.

We are caregivers, not servants!

Justice Will Be Served!

Since NMASS launched the Justice Will Be Served campaign last year to fight long hours and the stealing of tips in restaurants, more restaurant workers are joining the New Silver Palace workers in challenging sweatshop conditions.

On Aug. 29, NMASS supported former workers from the King Chef Buffet in Wayne, New Jersey, to expose abusive conditions that they have been fired for protesting. The workers had not been paid *any* wages, were forced to give management as much as \$18 of their daily tips, and were subjected to racist and sexist verbal abuse.

These workers and others have been inspired by the New Silver Palace workers, who have been picketing four years. In July, management changed its name (once again) to Dong Khanh in an attempt to avoid paying the workers what it owes and to try to fire members of the 318 Restaurant Workers Union.

NMASS member Scott Carter spoke Aug. 29:

"As a waiter in New York City for over 5 years, I am painfully aware of the long hours and sweatshop conditions. Scheduled double shifts and 12-13 hour workdays are normal. The struggle at King Chef is not an isolated 'immigrant' problem. Whether we are single parents or students or recent arrivals or 'not the right skin color,' we must organize as workers to fight for a better life for ourselves!"

Taking Control of Our Homes, Our Community

As greedy developers drive working people out of our homes in Lower Manhattan, NMASS is uniting all who live, work or study there to take control. The construction of luxury apartments and pricey NYU dorms have forced out those who can't afford rising rents, and forced others to take another job, work more hours, double up in apartments, and watch our neighbors, stores and parks disappear. We are fighting the development by Edison Properties of a 23-story luxury tower planned for E. Houston at Ludlow. NMASS and others in the Lower Manhattan Anti-Displacement Coalition filed a lawsuit to reverse the granting of a construction permit by the NYC Board of Standards and Appeals. The BSA accepted dishonest evidence and did not address secondary displacement. We now have until only November — when our legal appeal will be heard — to build a mass community protest against this project. Join us to fight back!

VOTE FOR THE BOARD OF NMASS!

Sun. Nov. 11, 2001 11:00am-7:00pm at the NMASS Center in the YWCA 30 Third Ave., Bklyn. The Board of Directors will make all major policy & programmatic decisions for NMASS. It should represent the needs & aspirations of working people. Dues-paying members may vote. Ballots & dues must be rec'd by Nov. 11, 2001 (see reverse). Meet the candidates at our Oct. 27 Celebration!



Mussa Abdulkader
An immigrant from Eritrea, he worked as a school custodian before being injured on the job.



John C. Antush
A high school teacher, he is active with Justice Will Be Served and the Membership Committee.



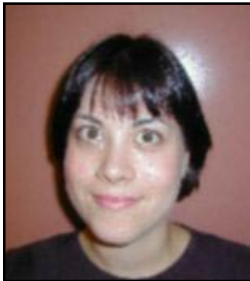
Olimpia Castillo
Of African-American & Honduran descent, she is an injured office worker & mother of five.



Maria Charchurt
From Poland, she worked as a home attendant over 8 years before being injured at work.



Ana Cheung
Raised in Brooklyn, Ana is a high school senior and a leader of our Youth Video Project.



Andrea Fabry
Born in Budapest, she's a SUNY grad student & a leader of the Ain't I a Woman?! campaign.



Alexis Gabrielle
Suffers from a work-related injury. Wants Caribbean- and African-Americans to join fight.



Lea Geronimo
A Filipina-American, she's active on the fundraising committee & Anti-Displacement Campaign.



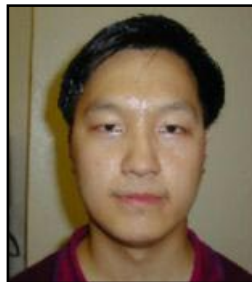
Alia Hasan-Khan
Born in Pakistan, she's an artist active in the Ain't I a Woman?! campaign.



Eva Herrera
Born in Mexico and injured in a T-shirt factory in Brooklyn, she's in the It's About Time campaign.



Ruth Herrera
A Mexican-American youth who's starting college and working on Youth Video Project.



James Hsi
A leader of the Justice Will Be Served campaign, he's worked in many NMASS drives since 1998.



Miriam Kessler
A student at the New School University, she is working with the Ain't I a Woman?! campaign.



Hoon Kim
Born in Korea and raised in Argentina, Hoon is active in the Anti-Displacement campaign.



Maria Labuz
A Polish immigrant injured as a cleaning woman, she has a 12-year case at Workers' Comp.



Amapola Ochoa
From the Dominican Republic, she was injured as a home attendant, but still has humor.



Margaret Ostanowicz
A Polish hospital worker who was hurt on the job, she is a leader of the It's About Time campaign.



Carmen Rivera
From Puerto Rico, a garment worker who says of NMASS: "We work with victims of slavery like me."



Arek Tomaszewski
Injured asbestos worker leads outreach to the Polish community and the It's About Time campaign.



Maria Tihui
Of Puerto Rican/Mexican heritage, she's a medical sociologist and a longtime social activist.

Fight sweatshops: join NMASS

ABSENTEE BALLOT

Only dues-paying members can vote. Board elections are Sun. Nov. 11, 11a.m. to 7 p.m. at NMASS, 30 Third Ave., Brooklyn. If you can't vote in person, use this absentee ballot. To join or renew membership send in the form on the right with dues. Ballots and dues must be rec'd by Nov. 11, 2001.

Candidates (choose 11 out of 20):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Mussa Abdulkader | <input type="checkbox"/> 2. John Antush |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Olimpia Castillo | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Ana Cheung |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Maria Charchurt | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Andrea Fabry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Alexis Gabrielle | <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Lea Geronimo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Alia Hasan-Khan | <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Eva Herrera |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Ruth Herrera | <input type="checkbox"/> 12. James Hsi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Miriam Kessler | <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Hoon Kim |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Maria Labuz | <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Amapola Ochoa |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17. Margaret Ostanowicz | <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Carmen Rivera |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Maria Tihui | <input type="checkbox"/> 20. Arek Tomaszewski |

First name _____ Last _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Let's build a movement to take charge of our time

Here are my dues for 2001. (Your membership is good for one year after payment is received.)

Check one: ___\$25 general ___\$10 student/underemployed/unemployed
___\$50 dues plus donation ___\$100 dues plus donation

First name (print) _____ Last _____

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Home phone _____ Work phone _____

Fax _____ E-mail _____

Job description _____

Talents and skills _____

Mail to: NMASS, P.O.B. 130293, New York, N.Y. 10013-0995

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: Date _____

___Cash ___Check Received by _____

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