

THE STORY OF NILDA

(FROM TALES OF FILIPINO WORKING WOMEN)

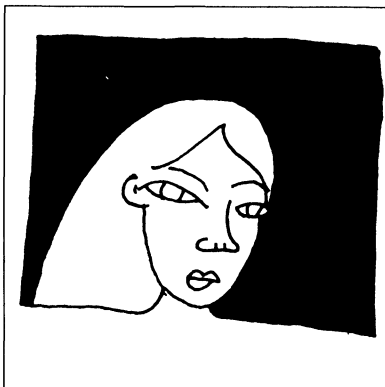
Christian Conference of Asia-Urban Rural Mission

In June 1984 the Christian Conference of Asia-Urban Rural Mission published a booklet entitled Tales of Filipino Working Women, a collection of first-person narratives of industrial women workers in Manila (compiled by Jing Porte and illustrated by Porise Lo). These stories reveal their oppressive working conditions, low wages, inadequate benefits, lack of job security, forced overtime and inhumane

treatment. Lack of equitable labour legislation and non-implementation of management-worker agreements currently perpetuate their situation. The following "Story of Nilda" is an extract from this publication, which was distributed at Nairobi.

En juin 1984 la Christian Conference of Asia-Urban Rural Mission a publié un livret intitulé Tales of Filipino Working Women (Récits de travailleuses des Philippines). C'est une collection de récits à la première per-

sonne, de travailleuses industrielles à Manille (rédigée par Jing Porte et illustrée par Porise Lo). Ces histoires révèlent leurs conditions de travail opprimantes, des salaires bas, des bénéfices insuffisants, un manque de sécurité d'emploi, du surtemps obligatoire, et un traitement inhumain. Un manque de législation équitable des conditions de travail et des accords employeur-employées qui ne sont pas mis en effet perpétuent leur situation. Le récit qui suit, "Story of Nilda" est extrait de ce livret qui fut distribué à Nairobi.



I'm Nilda. My parents, who were originally from Batangas, migrated to San Pablo City where I was born and raised by my father. I was only

four years old when my mother died.

My father, a farm helper, remarried soon after the death of my mother. We are now eight children in the family, two from my father's first marriage and six from the second marriage. We all lived in a small nipa hut which still exists up till now.

When I was about eleven years old, I had to stop my schooling to join my father in his work in the farm. We planted rice and helped in the harvesting of palay. We were paid piece-rate, about P7.00 daily (US\$0.50).

We worked from sunrise to sunset. That is the usual work of a farm help. We braved the rains and the heat whenever at work. After our work in the field, we would pick coconuts in nearby plantations and were paid piece-rate also. Piece rate means, if you don't work you starve. During bad times, they would even pay only P2.00 (US\$0.14). In this kind of job, we received as little as P20.00 (US\$1.40) per week.

When I reached sixteen, I went to town to work as a housemaid. I received P20.00 (US\$1.40) a month doing all kinds of house chores. I worked as a housemaid in about four families for a period of five years.

One of my godmothers who worked in a convent took me with her to Mindanao. I was able to find a job as a store helper. This was a bakery and it was also hard work. We worked from dawn to midnight. I received P40.00 (US\$2.80) a month, excluding food and clothing.



In late 1976, I went to Manila. I worked in a factory which was called "colorum" because it had no permit to operate. There were about 80 workers.

We had neither Social Security System (SSS) nor Medicare (Government Social Benefits). We were paid piece-rate and our salaries were remitted weekly.

I earned as much as P15.00 (US\$1.07) a day. We worked from 7:00 a.m. up to 5:00 p.m. and sometimes up to 7:00 p.m. If one wants to earn more, he can still work from seven in the evening up to six in the following morning. Almost all of us lived in the first floor of the factory; the work was in the second floor. We paid for our meals.

After a year, I left the factory without permission from the owner. He was very strict and would always curse us in a way not even the dogs could stomach.

One of my co-workers who landed a job in another garments factory convinced me to apply there since the "pay was good and there was a service bus." I applied and I was hired on May 26, 1978, with a starting salary of P14.35 (US\$1.02). It was less than the P15.00 daily salary I used to receive in the other factory, but at least, work here was only eight hours.

When I heard that my co-workers were forming a union, I joined them. I believe that only through unionizing can the workers effectively fight for their rights. If there is no union, nobody else will pick up the cudgel for us.