

Teacher's Notes

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Encadrées par un groupe d'étude au sein du travail un groupe de femmes immigrées qui travaillent dans une usine de blue jeans ont fait des diapositives et enregistré une bande au sujet de leurs expériences au Canada et de leur travail en usine. Les commentaires de leur professeur d'anglais sur ce qui les a incitées à élaborer ce projet ainsi que les paroles de la chanson enregistrés sur la bande sont imprimées dans cet article.

The tale of Fernanda, an immigrant Everywoman working in a Toronto blue-jean factory, has been told in a slide-tape that was made in an English class at a factory which is part of a program called English at the Workplace Task Force. The women responsible for the slide-tape were in the advanced class and had been studying together for one year. Before making the story, the group prepared interview questions. Then class members interviewed each other by using a tape recorder. The interviews were typed and copies made to use in class for reading and eliciting further questions.

From these interviews the class made the story of "Fernanda," which is a composite of the experiences of the Portuguese women in the class.

Some pictures were taken in the home of one of the women and others were taken at the factory. Since there were no men in the class, one woman brought her husband's jacket and tie to dress as the father in the story. The song from the tape, printed above, was written by Susan Howlett, a young woman who also works in a factory.

The factory English classes are organized and carried on by the English at the Workplace Task Force, which is co-operating with unions and boards of education to establish classes for workers. The task force is presently funded by the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation. During the past year funds were also secured from the Secretary of State for teachers' salaries in order to develop curriculum for this program.

The slide-tape is available for class use from the office of English at the Workplace Task Force, 500 King Street West, 2nd Floor, Toronto, Ontario. Telephone 979-3466.

(Our thanks to Mary Ellen Nettle, a teacher with the Downtown Churchworkers Association, for contributing these notes.)

Song of the Blue-Jean Factory

So far away from our homes left behind:
Portugal, West Indies, Hong Kong, and Italy.
From Ecuador and India, we've all come to Canada,
To find a better life for our family.

Chorus

Machines keep on turning and we keep on sewing.
Stitch pockets on jeans, keep them moving along.
Can't let your mind go astray.

Life is much harder for me and Jose.
He works at night and I work here all day,
And the little ones at home are so often all alone,
But with their education they'll do better someday.

Chorus

Time passes slowly here in the jean factory,
The line keeps on moving but the clock never turns.
When lunchtime comes around, time changes pace.
Eating your sandwich ends up being a race.

Chorus

Piecework is the way that we earn our wages.
We have to keep working, no time for a rest,
And we're forced to compete with our friends to get
more work.

Chorus

Time passes slowly here in the jean factory.
With backaches and headaches our health is at stake.
It's so hard to be sitting all day on those chairs.
To talk with each other is the first step toward change.