

Good morning, my name is Lupe Guzman. Not to worry, my voice sounds a lot worse than it feels.

I am 47 year old, single mother of six. I've worked at Carl's Jr. in Las Vegas for the last seven years. I am a shift leader on the graveyard shift for five days a week. After seven years, and more than three decades working in the food service industry, I am paid just \$8.75 an hour.

In 2008, during the financial crisis, the job I had then was eliminated. My husband and I separated and I attempted to support my children on my own. I could not afford our rent and bills on my savings alone. We moved around from motel to motel. I can't even begin to go into how hard that was on all of us. We were on a wait list for quite some time, and we finally landed in a housing community in North Las Vegas.

I applied for a job at Carl's Jr. and was hired right away.

In the beginning, I was making a dollar and a quarter more as management. I worked 40 to 50 hours a week. I drove from store to store according to the company's needs. It was difficult to get my children to and from school when I had no idea what part of the city I would be in on any given day. To make sure I could be there for my kids, I asked to be placed at one store, but that also meant Carl's Jr. would pay me less.

I am no longer considered a "manager," and I am paid just slightly more than Nevada's minimum wage. I count money. I do inventory. I prep food, clean restrooms, wipe down tables, and provide excellent customer service. I lock up and tend to the drive through. I doubt there is a robot that can do all of these tasks.

My store is located on the Las Vegas Strip. On graveyard shift, it's just me and the cook for the evening. At Carl's Jr, every dollar counts. Every order matters. Even when you are supposedly on your 15 minute break, you're expected to keep taking orders. The "break" is that you're allowed to sit down.

It's been like this from my first day working at Carl's Jr. For example, after only after a few paychecks, I noticed that my paid 30-minute lunch breaks were being removed from my check. Instead of 7 hours, my check reflected 6.3 hours. Every two weeks, I'm paid just under \$500. Every dollar, after bills and rent, is accounted for. When there is money missing, I notice. For about a year this happened. I said something to management and it didn't happen again, but I never got the back pay for that time. I know other people, who have not complained, who still get half an hour taken out of every shift, sometimes they even clock out and are told to keep working.

We are often understaffed. I work doubles and get overtime. But my store doesn't pay time and half. Sometimes they just cut off the extra hours entirely. When I spoke with my manager, they said they would put the extra hours on the next check. I had to wait to be paid on time for my hard work.

This isn't the first or last time I've played the waiting game with Carl's Jr. The computer that tracks our hours often freezes. We have notes that read "I came in from this time to this time, please put in my hours." But two weeks later, I'm still missing those hours. I told my boss: "please put my hours on my paycheck." He said okay, it'll go on my next paycheck. I told him I need my 5 hours. He said, "We'll take care of it next time."

It is simply wrong that Carl's Jr does not pay us for every hour we work. I try not to complain, but when I see an injustice, I am going to open my mouth. When I'm shorted on my paycheck, I won't keep quiet. But I know that others are too afraid to speak up.

I've been held up twice. Twice, I've had a gun pointed at me. Corporate didn't care about what I went through. I was throwing up and shaking, and they asked if anything was stolen. They didn't say anything about my well-being, except "good job", for protecting their money. There is no protection when I open that window. The only thing securing the window is a stick. It's an old building. I think that because our work generates significant profits some of that money should be used to ensure employees' safety. Right now, it feels like Carl's Jr. does not really care about my safety, about me.

My car hasn't worked in months. I walk my children to school, and on the way they say, "Mom, you work so much, you're never home." My children, who only have me. They have no idea how close I've come to not ever coming home again.

And for what?

We don't get health insurance. One of my coworkers couldn't take any maternity leave until she gave birth. People have to work every hour we can because we desperately need every dime we can get. Once they have a baby they have to go back to work after just a couple of weeks, because they need the money so badly.

Carl's Jr. recently raised prices by 10 cents, but the money hasn't gone to employees. Our wages stay the same. If it wasn't for minimum wage increases required by the law, I'd likely be paid the same as I was when I started working in the industry at 17. There are people that have been working there for years and are making the same as they have when they walked in. Without a minimum wage increase, we don't have a chance. We can't survive with what we are making now.

I work almost every day and am still considered poor. I live on housing assistance, food stamps, and Medicaid just to survive. There is no way we can make rent, bills, and transportation without public assistance. Even if you are a single person. People like Andrew Puzder don't see how regular Americans are living day to day. The only people who are not hurting, are people with money. People that are hurting are people like me, families like mine. Struggling to survive on minimum wage. When all we want is to live and sustain our families.

I worked on Christmas and Christmas Eve. My children were disappointed. It breaks my heart to leave them. I asked for it off, but the manager said there isn't anybody else to cover the shift.

When I work, I have to leave my children alone. We have dinner, I put them to bed and I go to work. That's our routine.

Because my car isn't working, I try to get to work on the bus. My store is 40 minutes away on the bus. If I miss the bus, I have to wait another 30-40 minutes. After I get home, I walk my kids to school. Then I come back home and fall asleep. I wake up and start all over.

I am so proud of my kids. They tell me, "Mom, you never have to work when I grow up. You don't have to work anymore. I'm going to buy you a house or a nice car." They are why I'm telling you my story and why I fight for something better.

When I've gone on strike, my kids are right up front, with the banners. They believe that everyone who works deserves to be paid fairly and have a voice on the job.

I'm making my voice heard. I've never been to jail. But on November 29 I took a stand and participated in civil disobedience alongside hundreds of people in the Fight for \$15 movement.

The corporate office sent word that they are "discussing" me. My co-workers said, "I'm proud of you."

Today, I believe that I'm not only speaking for myself, I'm fighting for all people who can't support our families independently because we're not paid enough. People who know that they could lose their jobs at any time, because there is no job security, no protection for our rights.

I am in this fight until we win. I'm going to see it through until we win 15 and union rights. When we stick together and speak out together, we are getting heard. We are getting taken seriously.

Because of my experience working for the corporation that Andrew Puzder is the CEO of, I do not think he is capable of being this country's Secretary of Labor. I do not think he can speak for working moms and dads like me. I believe that he looks at people like us as a cost to be cut, not as families who want a fair shot at a better life. Andrew Puzder supports ideas and policies that will make life harder for my children and me, not better.

Thank you for listening to my story.