

CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives

Volume 5 *CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives*

Article 48

2022

La Realidad Del Campo

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Recommended Citation

Rios Gomez, Chelsea (2022) "La Realidad Del Campo," *CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives*: Vol. 5, Article 48.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/courageouscuentos/vol5/iss1/48>



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La Realidad Del Campo

By Chelsea Rios Gomez

Ana Gomez Gutierrez. Trabajadora. Mayordoma. Control de Calidad. She dedicated 30 years of her life to the campo, a well-known male-dominated field, but that never limited her. After only two years as a worker, she quickly became a Mayordoma - a position she held for 20 years before switching over to quality control. Her primary area of expertise was any and all work related to grapes.

Working in the campo isn't a comfortable job. When Ana first started working, there weren't any laws for farm workers as we can see today. There were no sexual assault laws, no mandatory breaks for workers and no paid overtime. During this time, workers like Ana and especially female workers were forced to work through hostile environments because if they spoke up about any form of sexual assault there was fear of retaliation. Ana looked for another campo job and left that environment. Although today we have sexual assault laws put in place, many female workers still fear reporting these actions in worry of retaliation.

At this time, there wasn't a law that required employers to have restrooms and water for their workers. California summers, especially in the Central Valley where Ana worked, can reach upmost of 120 degrees Fahrenheit. When this law passed, Ana was already working as a Mayordoma and was certain to provide adequate breaks and water for workers. She even went above and beyond providing multiple options for shade, always brought foldable chairs, and would bring homemade Jamaica or Hibiscus water as it can be very refreshing especially after working for hours under the California sun.

The passing of these laws were to force employers to provide basic human necessities for their workers because they wouldn't otherwise. Even after the passing of these laws, many employers would actively choose to ignore them or provide them with horrible conditions. Most workers would adjust and

work through these conditions because they felt indebted to their employers for hiring them. Many being undocumented immigrants who felt lucky simply being able to provide for their families in this country.

There have been many stories of people dying on the job due to overheating and dehydration. These stories are why Ana took her job seriously. She understood and had the humanity that many employers lacked. She knew that these workers and herself deserved better working conditions and didn't hesitate to call OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) if needed.

Working in labor intensive jobs like the fields especially after 30 years comes at a cost. Closing the end of her work in the campo, Ana was dealing with really bad allergies, Rheumatoid arthritis, and Sciatica. This meant she couldn't exist without agonizing discomfort and pain without a bottle of ibuprofen by her side. She had trouble walking, sitting, and sometimes even opening her own water bottles prior to receiving treatment. Shortly after her diagnosis she stopped working the fields, but her love for her work never ceased. When she finds time and opportunity you'll still find her working in the fields. Nothing can stop someone from doing what they love, and in this case, not even excruciating pain.

