

OPEN LETTER TO TIMOTHY H. BELLAS, Garment Workers Trust Fund

From: The Undersigned, and on behalf of Chinese Garment Factory Workers on Saipan

Re: Application for Compensation from Garment Workers Trust Fund

Summary: Insufficient Compensation from Original Class Action Suit Settlement

CC: Saipan Tribune, Marianas Variety, Ruth Tighe, Huffington Post, Ms. Magazine
The Office of the Ombudsman, Wendy Doromal, George Miller's Office

Dear Sir,

I, Chun Yu Wang, was employed at Mirage Garment Factory from February 7, 2000 to August 20, 2001. During that time I, and many others, were routinely denied compensation for time worked. Specifically, after what were often 16-hour days of long, arduous work, we were required to complete our work tickets during non-paid, after-work hours (i.e. on our own time) in order to submit them the next day so we could be paid for our hours. This often amounted to fully two or more hours spent every day for which we were never compensated. It was as a result of such unfair practices, abusive work environments, and living conditions, that others and I opened our original case against Mirage and other garment factories. The total amount of overtime pay I was personally denied during that time was approximately between \$1,500 and \$2,000.

Almost a full seven years later, after moving on to work at several other garment factories, and under similar conditions, many of us still on island were finally told that our settlement checks for the years of injustice we had suffered had arrived. We were elated, but soon that elation turned to sadness and anger.

Much to my personal disappointment, I received a grand total of only \$220.00 after waiting for many years, and having been promised that, as this was the United States of America, we would be compensated justly for the time worked. We took the chance that the time, energy and personal risk involved in bringing the case to the court system would be justified. I was very hopeful that the American justice system would prove sympathetic to our plight. This hope was what kept and still keeps many of us going and suffering the slights and injustice we experience on a daily basis. We felt we had a way to right the wrongs. It's not clear what formula was used to arrive at the original compensation amounts, but it was obviously not based on un-compensated hours.

What we garment factory workers respect and value most about our opportunity in America is the assurance that people's rights are upheld. We suffer abuse and exploitation, and are taken advantage of, it seems, to enrich lawyers and other entities but we, the workers who actually endure the exploitation, are left still wanting and feel ultimately let down by the system.

Whether we are now experiencing emergencies or not, that money was judged by the legal system to be for the compensation and benefit of contract workers, particularly those who were part of the suit. Many, like myself, who actually brought cases to the court system received less compensation than those who didn't.

I request, therefore, that in order that justice be served in this on-going, still painful and relevant matter, that I, and others who have been similarly shortchanged by our settlement checks be awarded our fair and just compensation through the Garment Workers Trust Fund in lieu of any such funds being diverted to "charity." As long as there is a single garment worker remaining who has endured such a plight, the fund should feel obligated to fulfill its intended purpose and disburse compensation until it is depleted. This is the fair thing to do.

Such compensation does not offer us comfort or luxury, sir, it offers us simply justice.

Chun Yu Wang,

Weihong Yu

Contact: P.O. Box 503991, Saipan MP 96950