

Writing Sample #2 – Op-Ed Endorsing Boycott Against Hyatt Hotels (part of press packet for client)

Equal Justice Center Endorses Boycott Against Hyatt Hotels

Last week, *Unite Here* – the largest hospitality workers’ union in the U.S. – announced a global boycott of Hyatt Hotels here in Washington DC. Since then, a website was launched that allowed visitors to vote Hyatt the worst hotel employer in America. Until I concluded this sentence, 69,411 votes were cast.

Now it’s 69,412.

Why did I cast that ballot? The same reason why I’ll room at Motel 6 before I do the Hyatt from here on out: I was once a minimum-wage worker.

Of the 8 million minimum-wage employees currently working in the U.S. hotel industry, none have known workplace oppression quite like Hyatt’s employees. At hotel locations all across the nation, these staffers are overworked, underpaid, and downsized for either unjust or unsubstantiated reasons.

These problems stem from the dreadful practice of subcontracting, which has eliminated most of Hyatt’s full-time housekeeping positions and turned those remaining into temp jobs. Each of these temps must clean as many as 30 rooms a day, for as little as \$8/hour.

Unsurprisingly, Hyatt housekeepers reckon with physical pain as though it were an occupational hazard. Antonia Cortez of the San Francisco hotel says that the staff’s pain has gotten so bad, “in the locker room, everyone is always asking for Tylenol.” Proving that this is by no means an isolated phenomenon, Jacqueline Ammoah of the Chicago Hyatt reports that “before we start our day, there is always a line at the water fountain for women to take their pain pills.”

Now it’s 69,416.

This past fall, two female staffers from the Santa Clara location – Martha and Lorena Reyes – discovered break-room pictures of their Photoshopped heads on bikini-clad bodies. A month later, they were both fired, accused of overextending their break periods.

Last July, a Hyatt manager in Chicago turned on heat lamps above striking workers. In an apology statement which followed, Hyatt singled out the manager as a target for blame, insisting that the act was not “in line with our values or with our corporate policies.”

What sparked no apology, however, was the company’s decision back in 2009 to lay off entire staffs in Boston and Cambridge. These career workers were replaced with temporary hires.

Now it’s 69,421.

Perhaps it's no surprise that a cavalcade of advocacy groups – AFL-CIO, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and the National Organization of Women, to name a few – has endorsed a worldwide boycott initiative against the hotel chain that spans 20 cities across the globe. Even the NFL players' union vowed to take part in the initiative, sending letters to players which urged them to consider employment practices when choosing their hotels.

Companies like Hyatt represent everything Equal Justice Center strives against. They systematically oppress their low-wage workers by cutting jobs and keeping survivors hanging on by temp salaries and Tylenol. They treat justice like a pest problem, their workers the pests. On behalf of the entire EJC, I stand behind these mistreated employees and ask whoever's reading this to join this fight against employers intent on squashing them like bugs.

These are people with faces, names, friends and families. Some make your bed, others carry your luggage, and some just might open the door for you. They are not pests, and have 69,428 people attesting to that fact.

Now it's your turn.