

It wasn't difficult to find that first job. Dolores recommended me and all I needed to show was a birth certificate. They didn't even ask to see my primary school certificate. ... What was difficult was the work itself, or at least the conditions in which we had to work. I had always liked to sew and we were very proud of the Singer we had in our home in the village. ... But this work was nothing like the sewing I knew. In the maquila, you sewed the same piece over and over. For months I did nothing but zippers. Hundreds of thousands of zippers. ...

We couldn't go to the bathroom when we needed to, and we could only eat lunch in the twenty minutes when the supervisor said we could take a lunch break. It was like being a little kid in school. In fact, we used to joke that this is why the maquila owners always want to know if you completed primary school. It's not because you need to know how to read or write in order to sew zippers. You just need to know how to sit still in your chair when, in reality, you have to leave the room to pee.

When I was sewing all day, my back ached, my kidneys ached, and my feet swelled up for lack of circulation. But with the microassembly [her second job] what started to go was my eyesight. I had all the other aches and pains, but now my vision started to go blurry. At that point I just said no. I have to feed my kids and I've got to have a job that gives me the right to go to the Social Security hospital. But I was only twenty-seven years old and, I thought, I've got to hang onto my eyesight. I'm going to need it later in life. ...

Mostly the people who hire you just want to examine you to make sure you're not pregnant, and they want to see your birth certificate to make sure that you're not underage or overage. If you're too young to work, they may have to pay a fine or they may have to pay a bribe in order to avoid paying the fine. If you're too old, they don't want you either, because they figure you're not going to put up with bad conditions. ...

You're going to work ten hours a day, Monday through Thursday, and eight on Friday, and get paid by the piece or by an hourly rate. ... The plant is going to be cold in winter and hot in summer. The supervisors can be men or women, they can be norteamericanos or Mexicans. But, whoever the supervisors may be, it's always the gueritos, the "blondies," who have the last word.

-Oral History of Anadelita Sandoval (1994) excerpt