

Low-Wage Work—Writing Prompts

1. Share a time you have stood up for higher pay, better conditions, and/or dignity on the job. How did you do it? What did you gain in the process?
2. Read the excerpt in the box on the right and respond to the questions below:
 - a) Reflect on the fact that restaurant jobs are growing faster than other jobs, but the pay for workers is lower than most other workers. What is your experience with restaurant jobs?
 - b) What do you think of the ROC's decision to target and disrupt Darden Restaurants? What effect do you think the protests have had on the restaurant chain's public image and profits? What effect did it have on its workers and consumers? Does it make sense for workers to organize in this way? Why or why not?
3. Image below: During the "March for Rights, Respect, and Fair Food" (p. 118), workers hold signs that demand "Respect" and "Dignity." Why would workers make these demands? What does this mean: "Publix profits equals farmworker poverty." What is the cultural norm these workers are pushing back against with their artwork and messages? How does taking artwork into the streets (rather than into a museum) impact our society?

Low-Wage Restaurant Work

"Saru Jayaraman is co-founder and co-director of Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (rocunited.org). ... Jayaraman explains the challenging landscape confronting ROC: 'The restaurant industry right now is the second-largest private sector employer in the U.S. It's over ten million workers. One in 112 Americans work in the restaurant industry. It's absolutely the fastest-growing sector of the U.S. economy.' While many restaurant chains are reporting record sales, this good fortune has not been shared with the workers. The restaurant industry is 'the absolute lowest-paying employer in the U.S.,' says Jayaraman. And restaurant workers typically lack benefits such as paid sick days and adequate health insurance. ROC is pushing back on multiple fronts. ... In 2008, ROC helped win \$4 million from Fireman Hospitality Group, a large New York City restaurant owner, to settle claims of stolen tips and wages, sexual harassment, and discrimination. In 2012, Darden Restaurants, the world's largest casual dining company (it owns Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, and other national chain restaurants), announced that it would limit workers' hours in order to avoid paying for their health care under President Obama's Affordable Care Act. Two months later, the company canceled the plan after ROC and others protested and profits plunged 37% in response to bad publicity generated by the protests" (pp. 121-122).



DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 4, 2016.

A \$50 stipend will be paid to each adult education student whose work is accepted for publication.

PLEASE SEND MATERIAL TO:

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DON'T FORGET to include contact information on every submission.