

## **Statement of "Katrina"**

Before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
Hearing on the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
March 31, 1998

My name is Katrina. When I came to Saipan in 1995, I was 14. My passport said I was 21 and I was a tourist. My boss told me in the Philippines that I would be a dancer but not naked. The first day he forced us to dance naked. He said don't tell your age or that you are a tourist. I was shocked. He said if you don't follow me, the door is open. Buy your own ticket and pay back the \$1,000 promotion fee. I had no choice. I had no money. I was so scared. I'm so young, I don't know what's going on.

I thought laws in America protect workers and treat people with respect. I thought I would make good money to send home to my family. But I was treated like an animal. Life was really hell in Saipan. I couldn't believe America would let bosses take away my childhood. I should have been in school, not working there naked. I was ashamed. I still have friends there who are suffering like I suffered. I'm not the only one. Many workers are in bad condition. I don't want this to happen to anybody else like happened to me.

When I started my job, I didn't want to take my clothes off. My boss was swearing at me. I was just crying. I took my clothes off and he made me do splits. It really hurt me. He said he would teach me to dance. He wanted me to be a star because I'm younger than everybody. What could I do? I learned how to use cough medicine so I don't know what I'm doing. When I learned how to drink, I'm always drunk and they took advantage of me. They put their fingers inside me but I can't do anything about it. My boss said the customer is always right. One customer bit my nipple so hard that I just slapped him. One time a customer punched me on my bare stomach. They try to push sex on me in front of everybody on stage. The customers at the bar were everybody, like local people. Some customers are crazy. My boss told me to light a cigarette from my mouth and put it in my vagina. He was so mad at me because I would not spread my legs. So many times I burned my legs. The customers would come up and light their cigarettes between my legs. I had to put my mouth on their private parts and sometimes they came inside me. Sometimes my boss told us girls to have sex together so the customers wouldn't get bored. They took videos of me many times on the stage doing "shower shows" and "cigarette shows" for commercials and to put in magazines.

My body hurt. My heart hurt. I cried a lot and I was scared. But I had no choice. I had no money to buy a ticket to go home. What could I do? When my boss said he was sending me to Hong Kong, I was really scared. My friend went there and they made her a prostitute.

Three years later I am still trying to get justice for what happened to me and the other girls. But nothing has changed. What happened to me was against the law. New laws can help other girls. It's too late for me.

I was born in Manila on June 9, 1981. My parents were squatters and they fought a lot. I quit school and ran away when I was 12. I looked for a job. I met Kate Zamora and she got me a job in the Pambuli Club as a G.R.O. That means a guest reception officer. When I danced in Manila I gave my mother money. She knew where I worked and sometimes visited. Then the money became less and less.

The first time I met Kate's father, Eugene Zamora, he took videos and pictures of me in the club. It was my first time to dance naked. I didn't have any hair between my legs because I was young. I was ashamed and I didn't want to take off my clothes. His daughter started swearing at me and I was afraid so I did it. The first English words I learned were swear words.

The Zamoras asked me if I wanted to work in Saipan, America. They said I would make a lot of money because I was still young. They said I wouldn't have to pay anything, even board and lodging or promotion fees. They said I wouldn't have to dance without clothes. They were all lies.

My passport had lies too. It said I was born in 1974 and that I was going to Saipan to be a tourist. I told the Zamoras but they said not to worry because they faked the passport. There were five girls who went together. We got to Saipan on Nov. 14, 1995. Francisco Matsunaga from Saipan was the business partner of my boss. He was the one who met us at the airport. When we first came we lived in the Club Kalesa, where we worked. We stayed there one month or more and we slept on the stage and sometimes on the chairs. Then we moved to the barracks. We couldn't leave the barracks unless we had to buy clothes or something like that. The guards from the bar had to go with us. After the bar closed they would check our beds and make sure the rooms were locked. There were rules on the wall -- no noise, no gossiping, no visitors. It was like a prison.

I was supposed to get \$4 an hour for dancing naked and doing special shows. But I never got that much. My bosses took out \$50 for promotion fees, \$50 for talent manager, \$50 for board and lodging and more from every pay. They never really explained how much I was really earning per hour and how many hours I was working. After a few months they always paid us late. We had to work six days a week and sometimes they made me work on my day off too. That wasn't right. They didn't pay me for that day, only tips from "ladies drinks" that customers bought us. They kept our pay two times for a deposit for emergency funds. But when I asked for the fund because my dad was sick, they only gave me \$50. What can I buy with \$50? Not even medicine.

On Jan. 8, 1996, the Zamoras took us to Palau for one day so we could get entry permits to Saipan. My permit was for waitress, but they pushed me to dance.

In Saipan they taught girls to be prostitutes in Hong Kong. My friend Melanie worked at Club Kalesa. They sent her to Hong Kong in 1996 when she was 18. She told me she was in Saipan about three years already. She was 15 when she got to Saipan. In March 1996 my boss told me he was getting papers for me to go to Hong Kong. He told me when my visa arrived and ticket, I would just have to go. There would be no question, I would have to fly out.

In late October I went to the Philippine Consul General and later the Saipan Labor Department to complain. I told them I was only a minor and I came on a tourist visa. I told them I had to dance naked even if my permit was for a waitress. The U.S. Department of Labor filed a civil case for me and the U.S. Department of Justice filed a criminal case. What happened to me was a crime. It is illegal. The Philippine Consul General and Filipino groups in Guam and Hawaii helped take me to the United States because my life was in danger. My life was threatened and my family too. People said if I didn't drop the case someone was going to set up my mom like she was a drug dealer, and my dad too.

Today I live in the United States in the foster care program and I am 16. I have a good job and a home tutor. Many Americans have helped me and I thank them and the U.S. government for giving me a second chance in my life. But the other workers in Saipan won't get this chance. That is why it is important for me to speak for them.

Please change the laws to help the other girls and workers. Please change the laws to make bad bosses go to jail and have a lesson. That is the only way to change the CNMI. Otherwise human beings will still be treated like animals. Young girls like me will still dance naked in bars instead of go to school. They will still learn to be prostitutes. They will have no childhood.

Please give me and the others justice. Everybody is expecting justice from you because we have been waiting too long.

Thank you.