

## "Imagine working in a factory where no soap, towels or toilet paper were made available for workers to use..."

### El Derecho Del Pueblo

Columna de comentario [Situaciones de Riesgo y Salud](#) abogado y maestro Matthew "Mateo" Katz.

### The People's Right

A column of social commentary [Destiny](#) and legal advice by attorney and teacher Matthew "Mateo" Katz.

Imagine working in a factory where no soap, towels or toilet paper were made available for workers to use. You are told by your bosses that "you must bring your own" if you want to use the bathroom. Furthermore, exit doors are blocked by towering storage boxes and refuse litters the entire workspace constantly. Your boss tells you that he can't afford to pay you the minimum wage and instructs you to work extra hours "off the clock" to help him make ends meet. You are required to work many weekends, holidays, and almost never get any substantial break for lunch or otherwise.

In another situation, imagine you are a woman who starts to work for one of the largest retailers in the country, devoting countless hours to the store and after nearly ten years of work you rise up to the position of store manager. You are so strongly supported by your employers that they even ask you to open your own store in another town. Next, you discover that a male employee who has worked for the company for only one-year, makes \$10,000 more in annual salary than you do. When you complain you are told to mind your own business and be happy with what you were given because "women shouldn't be running a store anyway."

In another case, imagine that you purchase a home in a cozy neighborhood after years of working hard and saving for this dream-house in your dream-neighborhood. Some years after you move in, a steel company erects a factory less than one mile from your home and, from two small smokestacks, spews unfiltered, toxic amounts of pollutants into your breathing air. Little do you know, the pollution is well in excess of the limits of federal law under the Clean Air Act.

To make matters even worse, the mortgage company who financed your home purchase has

almost doubled your monthly mortgage payment for no justifiable reason, and now begins court proceedings against you in attempt to take away your home.

What do all of these awful fact-patterns have in common? They are all situations in which consumers and workers- all common people do have a legal remedy: there are lawsuits that can be filed, demand letters that can be written, representation that can be provided to individuals in these situations. Indeed, each of the four fact scenarios above are taken from current court cases that have either been won by the consumer or otherwise show strong promise of victory in the court system.

The problem, more often than not, is that in our neighborhoods common people often feel so beaten down by the day-to-day struggles with their families, jobs and other problems in their lives, and/or are so suspicious of or afraid of the legal system that they do not bring their complaints to an attorney and thus an immeasurable number of strong and important lawsuits are never filed and too many would-be defendant wrongdoers are never brought to justice. In our neighborhoods, we know that there are far too many of these: employers whose unsafe workplaces cause unnecessary injury, bosses who hire and promote according to race and gender, corporations that pollute our air and rob our wallets with exploitative financing schemes. For each of these wrongdoers, there are laws that make their behavior illegal and can provide you with solutions. Only you can decide to take the first step.