

## JUST WORDS

### The Stories of Working People In Our Community

#### Episode 37: Rose

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Welcome to Just Words—the stories of working people in our community.

**If you are a cleaner at Camden Yards, you are paid 7 bucks an hour before taxes. You are hired on an as-needed basis by a temp agency.**

**You might have to wait hours for work, and it's never guaranteed.**

**Your life might sound something like this:**

My name is Rose Menustik and I'm from Baltimore City. I was a cleaner down there cleaning up the stadium. I had to clean the bathrooms and also had to pick up all the trash and debris left behind. It's very difficult to live on the salary they were giving us. I barely covered my rent. I had to go to social services and get food stamps and I had to get medical assistance to pay for doctor's visits and medical bills. It's very difficult to live on that salary. You just barely able to support yourself and let alone a child. It's stressful at times. You have to decide, do I buy medicine or do I buy food. So it's very hard, it's very difficult.

**Last January Rose began working to better conditions at Camden Yards with the United Workers Association, a human rights organization run by the cleaners. They allege terrible working conditions at the baseball stadium.**

The woman being disrespected and sexually harassed. And people working down there and not getting paid at all and being told to eat their lunch in the bathroom. They didn't care about your health problems, they treated you like you were less than a human being, like subhuman almost.

**So why not get a new job, some detractors say? If the cleaners feel they aren't being paid enough at 7 bucks an hour, or being treated fairly, why don't they find work elsewhere? Rose says it goes deeper than that—it's about a deeply entrenched system of employment that exploits-the temp agency system.**

Yeah it's easy to tell someone "oh just find another job", but for a lot of people, this is the only job they can get, is working through temp agencies. . Its not easy. You cant just walk into a restaurant and say, I want a job There's also 500 people who want the same job. All the factory jobs have left, all the manufacturing jobs. Eskay hot dog factory closed down. Down on Boston Street they used to have the American Can company that closed down. Near Canton they used to have the beer company, the brewery, that closed down. All these jobs have disappeared. And when you go to the temp agency, you have to go real early, and when you get there, there's already 40 people there. There is temp agencies all over Baltimore city and they are all located in really poor neighborhoods where they is not many jobs, and that is really the only place for people to go to the temp agency to get a job. And they know that and that is why they are located in poor neighborhoods.

**The cleaners have demanded that the Maryland Stadium Authority pay them a living wage, and set September first as a deadline. The stadium authority has said they will not meet that deadline. On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 11 cleaners will begin a hunger strike in protest. We'll hear more about that, next week.**

**Music: Asheru and Blue Black *Theme Music***

Produced by Jessica Phillips. Hosted by Marc Steiner.

Through a grant by the Open Society Institute-Baltimore. Visit them on the web at [www.osi-baltimore.org](http://www.osi-baltimore.org).

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