

FOOD FIGHT: *FORKED* AUTHOR DISCUSSES FOOD INDUSTRY LABOR ISSUES



Seventeen states, as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, still pay the federal minimum wage of \$2.13 per hour to workers who receive more than \$30 in tips per month, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Saru Jayaraman, a professor at the University of California at Berkley, will address food industry wage inequality and what's happening more broadly within the economy in a Jan. 23 talk "Food First: Justice, Security, and Sovereignty" at the University of Oregon.

Jayaraman speaks to universities throughout the U.S. on issues covered in her latest book, *Forked — A New Standard for American Dining*, drawing attention to the lack of workplace benefits, inequality and sexual harassment within the food industry, as well as how the public can become engaged and fight for change.

President-elect Donald Trump's pick for secretary of labor, Andrew Puzder, has opposed an increase in the minimum wage and supports automation to replace minimum wage workers.

Jayaraman doesn't believe Puzder is fit for the appointment. As the co-director of Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC) United, she's spent her career supporting food industry workers. She co-founded the organization together

with workers who lost their jobs at Windows of the World, the restaurant on top of the World Trade Center Tower One.

Jayaraman also moves legislation across the nation, such as pushing to eliminate a two-tiered wage system.

"And so really we've come to understand and promote the idea of one fair wage — the idea that everybody should be paid a full wage with tips on top," she says.

Maine recently became the eighth state to raise the minimum wage for restaurant workers to the full state minimum, but Jayaraman says that "as long as the majority of the country exists in the two-tiered wage system," states like Oregon will feel the stretch because neighboring states "can pay a lower wage for tipped workers."

In addition to poverty wages, food industry workers face numerous workplace degradations. A Jan. 10 ROC United report detailing multiple workplace violations occurring at CKE Restaurants, which owns Hardee's and Carl's Jr., further questions CKE Restaurants CEO Puzder's ability to run the Department of Labor — the department in charge of investigating labor law violations.

The questionnaire, completed by 564 CKE workers, showed that 66 percent of women at CKE Restaurants experienced unwanted sexual behaviors at work, 28 percent

of workers reported wage theft violations and 79 percent of workers said they've served and prepared food while sick.

"I think the report that we put out shows that it's not even a matter of this man's not being qualified to be secretary of labor," Jayaraman says. "The truth is, this man should be indicted by the very agency that he is now being promoted to run. His company needs to be under serious investigation by the Department of Labor."

Forked's website includes a series of short films — one of which documents Jayaraman's trip to a Denny's in North Carolina, where restaurant workers receive \$2.13 an hour and are forced to rely on tips to supplement a wage far below the federal minimum.

Jayaraman says the wage is horrific. As she and her team have researched the issue, especially over the last five years, they've begun to understand it more deeply.

"It's not just a matter of a ridiculously low wage, and it's not just a matter of raising that wage. We've come to understand that it's the source of the absolute worst sexual harassment of any industry in the United States, and that it's actually a legacy of slavery." ■

Saru Jayaraman speaks 3:30 pm Monday, Jan. 23, at the Knight Library Browsing Room at the University of Oregon.

FORMER CITY COUNCILOR ANDREA ORTIZ REMEMBERED

In a 2007 interview about her Ward 7 Eugene City Council seat, Andrea Ortiz told *EW* that something she treasured about Eugene was this: "We put such a high value on humans, how we live our lives, the quality of education and the environment."

Ortiz, who was born May 4, 1957, in Riverside, California, died Jan. 20 of bronchitis that turned into pneumonia. As the outpouring on social media shows, her fellow humans put a high value on the former city councilor and longtime community activist.

On top of Ortiz's two elected terms on the City Council — she stepped down in 2012 to take a position at PeaceHealth's Sacred Heart Hospital — she was a key figure in getting a police auditor, served on the Bethel School Board and on the Kids' FIRST Center board, volunteered at the Oregon Country Fair and worked with Centro Latino Americano, says her daughter-in-law Keri Ortiz.

Keri Ortiz, who is married to one of Andrea's three sons, Raoul, adds: "Those are just her public accomplishments. Privately, she was 'mom' to any kid who

needed a safe place and a hot meal. She didn't pass judgment but offered advice. She told me multiple times that 'everyone is someone's child.' That philosophy was the driving force in all her work on behalf of the homeless and low-income community."

Former mayor Kitty Piercy wrote of Ortiz's passing on Facebook, saying, "I cherished her honesty, her commitment to justice and her deep love of her family. I counted on her understanding of the needs of people who struggle with jobs and take care of their families."

Of the outpouring and recognition for Andrea Ortiz, Keri Ortiz says, "She really devoted a lot of herself for our community. While she never did it for the recognition, I know this will make her smile."

Keri Ortiz says a memorial is not yet planned, but donations can be made to the Andrea Ortiz Medical Fund at SELCO Community Credit Union to help pay for Andrea Ortiz's medical bills, or community members can make a donation in Andrea Ortiz's name to Kids' FIRST or another children's charity. ■

